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Kristen Lourie, left, and Rose Dominguez, of Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, say the group's new contest is sure to garner plenty of helping hands. BERNICE PONTANILLA/METRO

Be the hand that stokes the yuletide fire

Yule love this contest. Winner gets to be an anonymous fire-minder on next year's MTS TV fireplace

BERNICE PONTANILLA
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Winnipeggers have a shot at yuletide fame with a new contest from Downtown Winnipeg BIZ — and the winner will stoke the flames during next year's holiday season.

Signy Gerrard, marketing and communications manager for Downtown BIZ, said the group has teamed with MTS to give one lucky person the chance to tend the famous yule log.

"The contest is the chance to 'Be the Hand,' be the official fireplace stoker for the yule log for the MTS TV fireplace," Gerrard said, adding the contest will be officially launched on Monday.

"We approached (MTS) with our quirky idea and said, 'What do you guys think?' and they loved it. It's so exciting and they're great downtown citizens."

The hand stoking the flames or adding logs to the fire has captured the imagination of Winnipeggers for years.

"It's just one of those beloved traditions, just as much as holiday decor and everything else. It just says Christmas to people in Winnipeg," Gerrard said.

"We think it's going to be a real point of pride for whoever wins to be able to say in next year's yule log video, 'That's me.'"

Kristen Lourie, marketing and design co-ordinator for Downtown BIZ, said she grew up watching the log during the holidays and laments that as a BIZ employee she can't enter the contest.

"It's my dream to have my arm in that video," Lourie said with a laugh.

"It's a part of Canada in the winter and I think it'd be really fun to do like a super bejewelled arm, maybe some sequins, some tassels, that sort of thing."

Gerrard said there is no age restriction for participants and the contest runs until Christmas Eve.

How to enter

- Each contestant has up to 10 chances to win. All you have to do is find the five fireplaces set up in storefronts downtown, find the codeword and enter it online at downtownpeggy.com.
- For the extra chances to win, contestants can snap a photo of themselves in front of the fireplaces "stoking" the flames and share it with Downtown Peggy on Twitter or Facebook.

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NEWS

Inquiry. Man loses appeal over nude judge photos

The man who prompted an inquiry into nude photos of a Manitoba judge has lost another court battle.

Alexander Chapman has lost an appeal of a lower-court ruling that ordered him to repay a $25,000 settlement from his former lawyer, Jack King.

In 2003, King gave Chapman sexually-explicit photos of King's wife, Lori Douglas, who was later appointed a judge.

Chapman accused King of sexual harassment but agreed to settle the matter, return the photos and never discuss the issue, in exchange for $25,000.

In 2010, Chapman broke the agreement, went public and filed a complaint with the Canadian Judicial Council.

King sued Chapman for breaking the settlement and won the money back. Chapman appealed and has now lost.

"... The motions judge correctly stated the legal principles to be applied and clearly understood the factual issues arising from the affidavit evidence," Justice Richard Chartier wrote Wednesday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Break beer with your bread

From left, John Graham, PR director for Canada Safeway Ltd., Jim Rondeau, minister responsible for the Liquor Control Act, and Al Roney of Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries, open Winnipeg's first Liquor Express location in the Pembina Village Safeway. HANDOUT

Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry

'I was a liar and they were incompetent'

A man who cared for a little girl for much of her short life has admitted he lied to social workers and believes his lies may have contributed to her death.

"I give you that I lied to them, there's no question about that, but ... they made no effort to follow up," Rohan Stephenson told the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry Thursday.

"I was a liar and they were incompetent, and 15,000 other circumstances all came together, and now Phoenix is dead."

Stephenson and his ex-wife, Kim Edwards, took care of Phoenix off and on starting mere weeks after she was born in April 2000. Her parents, Steve Sinclair and Samantha Kematch, had troubled, violent pasts and had drug and alcohol problems.

Sinclair and Kematch would go out partying and leave their infant with Stephenson and Edwards, whom they had met the previous year. At first, it was just overnight once in a while, but Phoenix's stays eventually grew to days and weeks at a time.

By 2001, Kematch and Sinclair lost a child to infection and separated. Sinclair would go on lengthy binges.

Social workers were content to leave Phoenix with Stephenson and Edwards — sometimes formally and sometimes informally.

Stephenson started working overnights, leaving his sons, 13 and 11, to care for baby Phoenix. Stephenson said he never told Child and Family Services about the situation. He also admitted to ignoring rules set by the agency. "All this stuff assumes that we respected the system and the rules, and we didn't." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Big bucks set to help retail-area traffic: Katz

Polo Park. City vows to make retail area more accessible

SHANE GIBSON
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The City of Winnipeg will spend at least $30 million to untangle tied-up traffic in the Polo Park area over the next two years, Mayor Sam Katz announced Thursday.

The investment is $10 million more than was announced in June when the city said $20 million from the $30.25 million sale of Canad Inns Stadium would be used for infrastructure renewal in the busy retail area.

"We want to make sure Polo Park is an area that people can access and egress easily as well as safely," said Katz at the announcement.

What exactly the renewal will look like has yet to be decided, but Katz said the work could include extending St. Matthews Avenue, and possibly adding extra lanes or left-turn lanes at corners famous for bottle-necking like St. James Street at Ellice Avenue, and Empress Street at Ellice Avenue.

Quoted

"We want to ensure this is done right ... and to do that right you have to invest dollars at the front end."

Coun. Scott Fielding (St. James-Brooklands)

"These are the types of things that need to be addressed," he said. "The due diligence … still has to be done."

Mike Mager, president and CAO of CAA Manitoba was thrilled by the announced improvements, especially, he said, considering the group's members voted St. James Street the province's worst roadway in a campaign earlier this year.

"It's long overdue, but great that it's finally coming to fruition," said Mager. "This is an area that has seen wonderful growth — and that's great for the city and great for people shopping and for enterprise — but at the same time you have to keep the infrastructure up."

Mayor Sam Katz pledged a minimum of $30 million on Thursday for infrastructure renewal on streets in the Polo Park area. SHANE GIBSON/METRO

The city said in a release it will consult with area businesses and residents to share plans and consider feedback before work gets underway next year and into 2014.

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High Five! In honour of the Downtown BIZ's new contest (see page 1) and for everyone who watches the holiday fireplace channel just to wait for the hand to come on the screen to poke the fire, here are five famous body parts that think they're human (or are simply memorable.):

SHANE GIBSON AND BERNICE PONTANILLA
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5 famous body parts that think they're human

1 Angelina Jolie's Right Leg

After a breakthrough appearance through a slit in Angelina Jolie's gown at the 2012 Oscars, the actress's right leg quickly became an Internet phenomenon. Even before the broadcast had ended, "legbombing" had become a thing, and her right leg became the meme of the moment. It even has its own Twitter account.

2 Nikolai Gogol's The Nose

In this Russian satirical short story, a St. Petersburg official wakes up to find his nose missing. When he finds his nose, which can talk somehow, it's gotten a higher rank than the man in the civil service and refuses to return to his face. The story ends with the man waking up to find his sniffer back where it started. The story must lose something in translation.

3 Thing

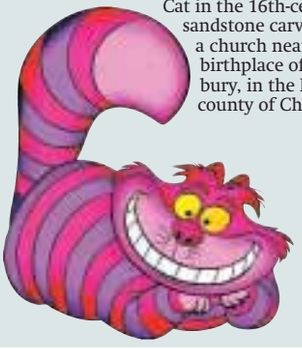
This most famous hand for generations of television audiences of the 1960s and movie-goers in the 1990s was Thing T. Thing of The Addams Family. Whether fetching Gomez Addams' cigars (and lighting them), grabbing the mail, changing a TV channel on the remote or just scurrying around the mansion, Thing was more than a hand, it was an integral member of the family. As Morticia would say, "Thank you, Thing."

4 Headless Horseman

This fictional character from The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by U.S. author Washington Irving is more famous for what he's missing and attempting to recover — namely his head. In Irving's story, made famous in a Walt Disney animation and the 1999 movie Sleepy Hollow starring Christopher Walken and Johnny Depp, the Horseman was a Hessian soldier killed during the American Revolution.

5 Cheshire Cat's smile

The moon turns into a smile and slowly the head, body and voice of the Cheshire Cat are revealed in the Walt Disney version of Alice in Wonderland. Who can forget that creepy scene when Alice is asked if she, too, can stand on her head? It's believed author Lewis Carroll found inspiration for the Cat in the 16th-century sandstone carvings on a church near his birthplace of Daresbury, in the English county of Cheshire.



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Finally. Group applauds move to toss out law letting the boss pay disabled less

Rights. MLPD rep says in the past, workers were sometimes only paid a few dollars a day

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The Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities (MLPD) is lauding the province's move to scrap an exemption that has allowed employers to pay workers with disabilities less than minimum wage.

"This has been on the books for years, and we're one of the last provinces to remove this from our legislation," said MLPD provincial co-ordinator Diane Driedger, noting only Alberta and Saskatchewan have similar exemptions still in place. "In the past … there were assumptions that people with disabilities were not employable in the regular market place."

The exemption was put in place in 1940 and gave government the ability to grant special licenses for employers hiring "handicapped employees." Varying wages, hours, and conditions of employment could be set with each licence, according to a 27-page report outlining reasons to get rid of the exemption compiled over the last year-and-a-half by the MLPD.

"We have always been concerned about that because, of course, some people were only getting paid several dollars a day in the past," said Driedger.

Just as the MLPD was about to turn over their report to government, the changes were announced Monday as part of the province's participation in a local forum recognizing the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

"The amendments are part of our much broader goal to achieve full and equal inclusion of persons with disabilities in Manitoba's labour force," said Family Services and Labour Minister Jennifer Howard in a release.

The MLPD report says the province hasn't granted a permit since 2009, and today less than 20 are still in place. While the active licences will be allowed to continue under the proposed amendment, no new permits will be granted in the future.

Man assaulted in front of hotel

Three people are in police custody after a man was reportedly beaten in front of a downtown hotel early Thursday. A guest at the hotel said staff told her the victim was thrown out of van that pulled up around 7:40 a.m. Two men and two women that got out of the van beat the victim, she said. An adult male and two adult females are now in custody and the investigation continues. SHANE GIBSON/METRO

Conservation and water

Province launches new recycling website, app

Recycling has entered the digital age in Manitoba.

A new site and smartphone app launched by the province Thursday will map out depot options for users with the swipe of the finger or click of the mouse.

"If you need to find a place to recycle your phone or laptop — now all you need to do is ask them," said Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Gord Mackintosh in a release. "Green Manitoba's new online tools make it easier than ever to find the many accessible recycling depots in the province."

The system will locate which recycling depot is closest to a user's home, and include information on where different materials like paint, batteries and e-waste should go.

Mackintosh also announced a proposed amendment that would allow the province to start banning some materials from landfills. Consultations on what the banned materials should be will be held early next year. METRO

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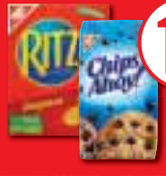

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The Barenaked Ladies play the Concert Hall with the WSO this weekend. JAMES MINCHIN/CONTRIBUTED

Alt-rock, classical music mashup as BNL teams with WSO

Holiday showdown. Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra to play second fiddle to Canada's Ladies

JARED STORY
winnipeg@metronews.ca

The Barenaked Ladies are coming to town, but this time with a classical twist.

The Ladies will share the stage with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra this weekend at the Centennial Concert Hall.

The shows are part of BNL's Symphony Barenaked tour, which sees the Toronto alternative-rock band performing its hits, as well as holiday songs, alongside some of Canada's top orchestras.

WSO's resident conductor Richard Lee said the orchestra's job is to act as the "fifth Barenaked Lady," complementing and enhancing songs like One Week and Brian Wilson, but never overpowering BNL. Besides, he said, that's impossible.

"Their instruments are amplified and they tend to be on the loud side," Lee said, noting he went to the University of Toronto with BNL bassist Jim Creegan.

"The danger when playing with pop acts is the orchestra isn't heard, so my preoccupation is to make sure we're actually audible to the audience. We'll work very hard to make sure we achieve that balance."

The contemporary meets classical concept may sound like world's colliding, but Lee says the two forms of music are actually not that far apart.

"It's not as if the chords the Barenaked Ladies play don't exist in our world. In fact, they wouldn't exist without classical music," Lee said, adding his favourite BNL song is the band's cover of Bruce Cockburn's Lovers in a Dangerous Time.

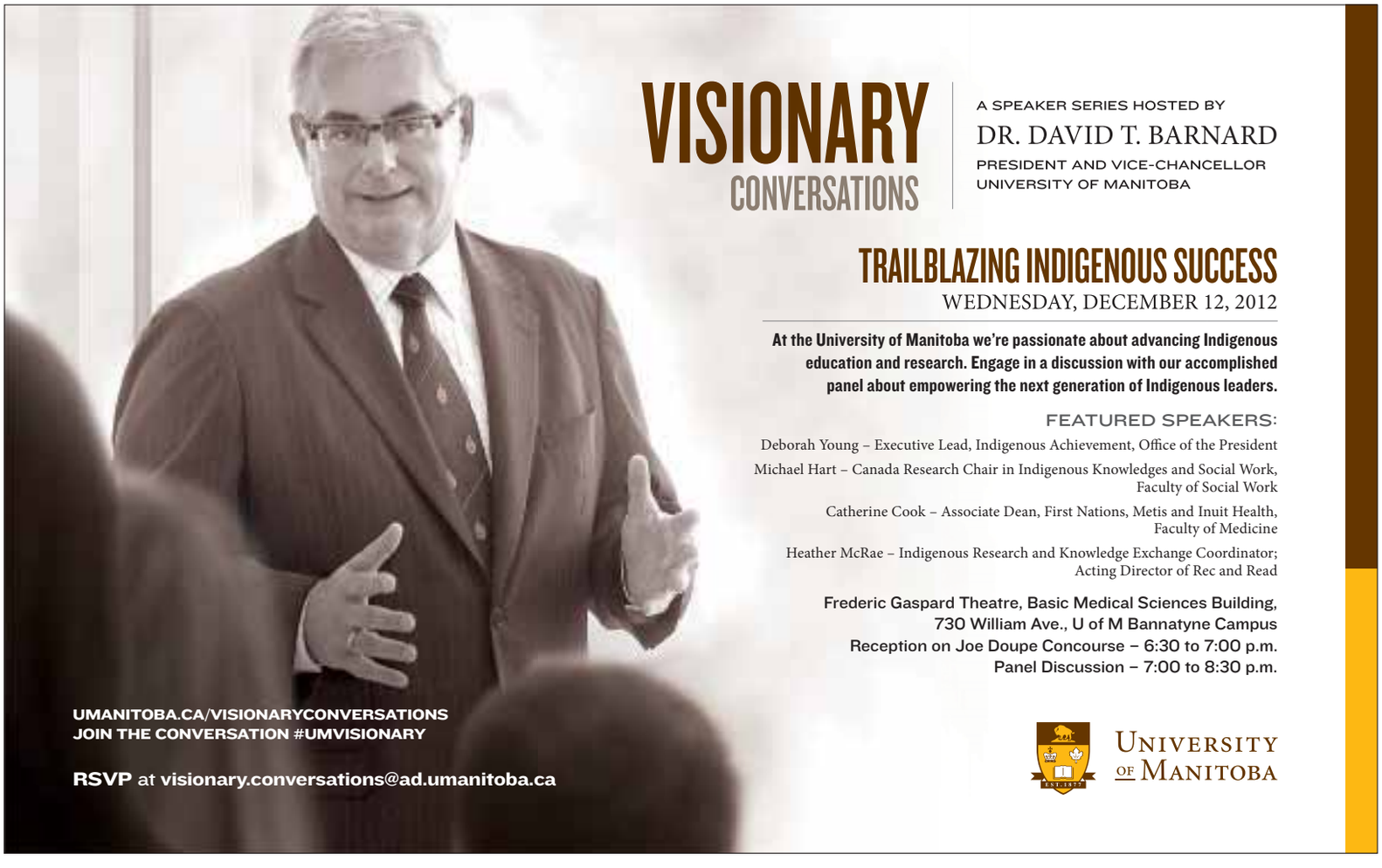
"A C major chord is a classical music chord. Beethoven used C major chords. When you play a C major chord on the guitar and follow it with a G major chord, well, these are progressions and musical ideas that were established by classical music."

Friday and Saturday's Barenaked Ladies/WSO shows start at 8 p.m. while Sunday's concert is at 2 p.m. Tickets range from $30.19 to $107.35 at Ticketmaster.

Quoted

"The danger when playing with pop acts is the orchestra isn't heard."

Richard Lee, WSO's resident conductor, on making sure the orchestra is heard.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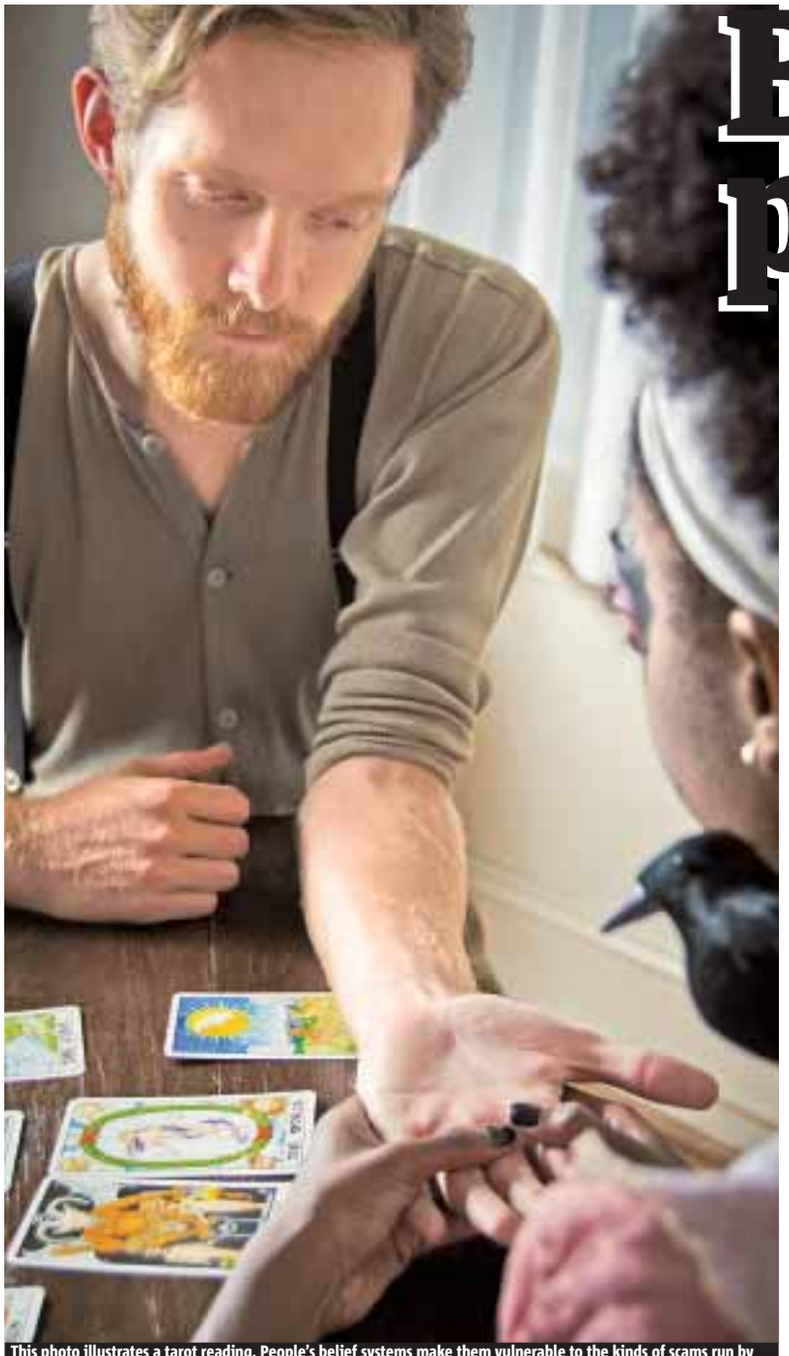


This photo illustrates a tarot reading. People's belief systems make them vulnerable to the kinds of scams run by false mediums, says James Alcock, a York University professor. Those beliefs range from believing in the existence of the occult to thinking that financial advisers' pyramid schemes will make you rich. ISTOCK

Bewitching promises

Psychic claims. Visit to 'Angel of Love' leaves Toronto man broke and heavy-hearted

"Rick" first went to see Angel because he wanted to find his ex-girlfriend.

He was responding to an ad by a psychic who calls himself the "Angel of Love."

He returned to Angel, repeatedly, because he wanted his band's music to be heard around the world.

Today, the ex-girlfriend hasn't returned, the band is still unknown and Rick is $11,000 poorer. He doesn't want his real name used because he's deeply embarrassed. He's an intelligent man who holds a good job with the provincial government.

Police say his case is not unique. Last week, Toronto police laid fraud charges against a man claiming to be a witch doctor. On Wednesday, police again cautioned the public about three women claiming to be psychics who preyed on two Chinese victims.

There is a fine line between psychics who break the law and those who don't.

According to Toronto police spokesman Const. Tony Vella, offering a psychic reading for money is legal. It becomes fraud if the psychic knowingly frightens the client into giving him money. There is a law against pretending to practice witchcraft, but it's legal to believe you are offering a real psychic reading.

Rick says Angel told him an evil spirit was causing his problems. For a fee, he claimed to be able to remove the spirit.

Rick met Angel and his female assistant at their office.

"To start off, it's going to be $900. So I went and I took $900 from … my Visa."

He was told to drink a cup of liquid.

"I started barfing right in a cup. I said it's too much. He said it's just the start."

Rick returned to Angel many times since his first visit last spring. He spent another $3,000, before being told to phone their leader, "Juan," in Miami. That man asked Rick for another $11,000. Juan convinced him the "evil spirit in the netherworld" would obey their commands, for a price.

"I took out $8,000 more. It was the most I could get," he said. "He said okay, enough, we'll work on it for you."

Angel didn't show him the spirit like promised, Rick says.

Toronto's Angel of Love has not been convicted of any crime related to his soothsaying business. JESSICA SMITH/METRO

Guilt and shame

"My money's gone though … They're laughing. Probably got a new car."

Rick, who says he was scammed but is too embarrassed to go the police.

Why we fall for scams

You've been very hurt by someone in your past

We're all susceptible to scams when they play on the belief system we've adopted since childhood, according to a psychology professor at York University in Toronto.

"Everybody's vulnerable," said James Alcock, who teaches a class on belief systems. "You could take a person who doesn't believe in curses, won't believe in psychics, is very careful about responding to spam emails and yet they could be suckered by some financial adviser."

Belief in psychics, witches, curses and spells is deeply rooted in many cultures and people usually pick up those beliefs as children.

While some psychics truly believe in what they're doing, others scam, picking up on their mark's vulnerabilities, said Alcock. "There's a need the person has, or the psychic creates the need, and then they fill the need," he said.

Many psychics use tricks of the trade to read people and gain their confidence, said Alcock. He gives a "cold reading" to a student in his class every year, even though he's not psychic.

"When you're talking to a psychic, you're giving feedback, even if you're trying not to," he said.

The combination of vague statements and careful observation works. Every so often, a student will come up to him privately after class to ask if he really is psychic, because he appeared to know all about some deeply personal thing that happened to them.

Evidence still sought

Cash for occult proof

A former magician and escape artist is offering $1 million to anyone who can show evidence of any paranormal, supernatural, or occult power or event in a controlled test.

James Randi offered $1,000 to the first person who could offer proof of the paranormal in 1964 and since then, no one has been able to claim the prize. With the aid of donors and his educational foundation, the prize grew to $1 million.

JESSICA SMITH/METRO

In Salem, Mass., metaphysical items such as tarot cards and crystals are counted towards a fortune teller licence. ISTOCK

The ex files: Metro reporter asks 'Angel' to find her guy

JESSICA SMITH
Metro in Toronto

I went to the Angel of Love's office not hoping to find my lost ex-boyfriend, as I told him, but to verify claims the psychic was telling people they were cursed and the way to remove it was to give him money.

I, too, was told that I had been cursed and that it would cost me a lot of money to have my ex-boyfriend back.

We met in the back room of a dingy apartment over a convenience store on Eglinton Avenue West in Toronto. There was no neon sign flashing "psychic," no crystal ball.

Only a pack of tarot cards on the messy desk gave it away as something a little different.

I said I couldn't get in touch with my ex and I was worried about his safety.

Angel spoke in a deep, gravelly foreign language and his assistant translated. After a bit of negotiation, he gave me a "reading" for $40.

"Your luck is not good," said the assistant as Angel read my tarot cards. "On your luck, depends everything. Love and work. Everything. Money, money comes and money goes."

They told me a lot of people are envious of me. I tried to look pleased, to pass off as vain.

"There is a woman, she is the one that has a lot of envy over you," said the assistant. "She is envious of your relationship."

They asked if I've been to a psychic before. I said no, truthfully.

"He can see witchcraft, spells and those things. There is a person who has probably put them to work on you," said the assistant as Angel read my palm.

The witch's curse is blocking my luck, so everything in my life suffers, he said.

The next day I got bad news. My ex-boyfriend is seeing someone.

I exclaimed, "You found him?" but the assistant explained that that's not what they do. They can just "see" he is seeing someone else now.

I tried to look aggrieved.

"We can always bring him back," said the assistant. "To you, for a price."

The assistant explained that there will be three different sessions required and there are different levels of service I can get. The top tier costs $1,500, in three payments of $500.

"They'll bring him back and he'll stay with you forever, he'll love you forever. That's why it's the highest price," he said.

For less money, my ex will return but won't be guaranteed to stay as long — $1,200 for four years, $900 for two.

If I opt for any, they will throw in a cure for the spell that the witch put on me and give me a charm that will keep me safe in the future.

I told them I'd think it over.

Reached by phone Thursday, Angel's assistant said they have never had any complaints about what they do and he doesn't feel they are taking advantage of people.

LISTEN TO A RECORDING OF JESSICA'S SESSION AT METRONEWS.CA

Salem's ordinance

If you can't beat them, license 'em?

Psychics seem to be drawn to Salem, Mass., and its rich history of witchcraft. To keep a handle on things the local government licenses fortune tellers.

The city offers four different kinds of licences, with different rules, said clerk Melissa Pagliaro.

"For a store licence, (it) has to consist of at least 75 per cent ... 'metaphysical' items," she said. "Each store can have up to five readers. They are all subject to an application and a (criminal history) check."

Such items include crystals, anointing oils, amulets, incense, candles, tarot cards, ritual attire, and books related to spiritual study or practice.

IN DEFENCE OF PSYCHICS

CLARE HINES
FOR METRO

For Clare Hines, who has visited psychics for years, it's not about getting back a boyfriend or winning the lottery. It's about keeping in tune with the universe

My great Aunt Nell sometimes said things about which she couldn't — shouldn't — know anything. Details weren't always accurate, but context and implications were.

Aunt Nell would say maybe it was a "gift" or being "sensitive" or having "psychic" powers. She claimed to know no more than anyone else, but that sometimes facts or knowledge revealed themselves to her.

When I was young, Aunt Nell used an ordinary deck of cards for my "readings." It was fun. In my teenage years and later there were no props or formal readings. We just sat and talked. I could tell when she tapped into me. She never spared me the negative — although she once didn't tell a friend he was really ill. And he was. Knowledge could be burdensome.

Aunt Nell said true psychics didn't advertise. One discovered them. Since her passing, I have visited two psychics. They were not easy to find. It's my experience psychics look like manicurists, administrative assistants and suburban mothers. They use props to aid with concentration. No one ever told me I'd receive a letter soon, take a trip or fall in love. I was told someone always lies to me, bodies of water calm me and I'm my own worst enemy. Indeed.

Sorry, Miss Cleo

Aunt Nell said true psychics didn't advertise. One discovered them.

After visiting a psychic, I'm more in tune with the universe. Implicitly I'm reminded much in life is random, the unpredictable is often more influential than the predictable, that I am not powerless but will never have complete control of anything. However humbling, such wisdom is therapeutic.

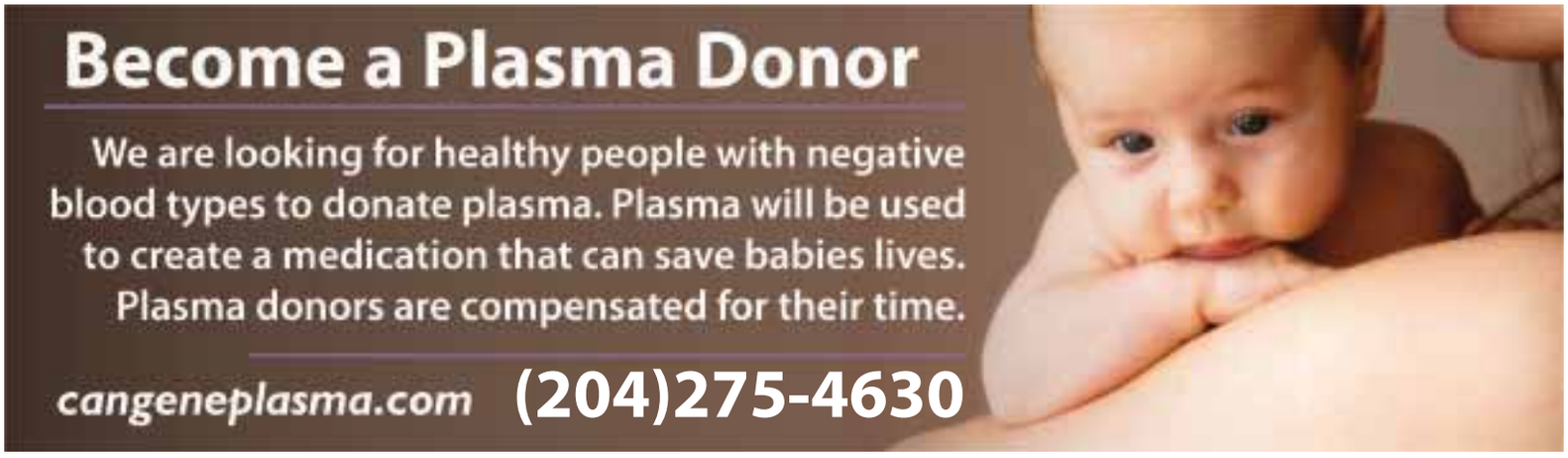
My general practitioner once sent me to a psychiatrist to discuss bad dreams and sleeplessness that were affecting my health. Treatment was very helpful. During one session, the psychiatrist asked if I visited psychics: "I suspect they will prove helpful to you."

Indeed.

Recent fraud cases

Between 1999 and 2010, five people were charged with pretending to practice witchcraft in Ontario. Toronto police announced two more cases in the last couple of weeks.

- Police said Wednesday they are searching for three female suspects who allegedly conned two women, aged 76 and 53, out of their valuables by offering to "bless" them.
- On Nov. 27, police arrested Gustavo Valencia Gomes of Mississauga, Ont. and charged him with pretending to practise witchcraft and fraud. Maria Roesta, 56, of Brampton, said she went into credit card debt to pay a self-described "healer," who convinced her that her headaches were the result of a curse and extravagant rituals were needed to lift it.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United States mulls plan to release mutant mosquitoes

Florida Keys. Modified insects would kill off their brethren and help prevent outbreaks of dengue fever

A squashed Aedes aegypti mosquito in Key Largo, Fla. WILFREDO LEE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mosquito-control officials in the Florida Keys are waiting for the U.S. government to sign off on an experiment that would release hundreds of thousands of genetically modified mosquitoes to reduce the risk of dengue fever in the tourist town of Key West.

If approved by the Food and Drug Administration, it would be the first such experiment in the U.S. Some Key West residents worry, though, that not enough research has been done to determine the risks that releasing genetically modified mosquitoes might pose to the Keys' fragile ecosystem.

Officials are targeting the Aedes aegypti mosquitoes because they can spread dengue fever, a disease health officials thought had been eradicated in the U.S. until 93 cases originated in the Keys in 2009 and 2010.

The trial planned by mosquito-control officials and the British company Oxitec would release non-biting male mosquitoes that have been genetically modified to pass along a birth defect that kills their progeny before reaching maturity. The idea is that they will mate with wild females and their offspring will die before reproducing. After a few generations, Key West's Aedes aegypti population would die off, reducing the dengue fever risk without using pesticides and at a relatively low cost, the proponents say. There is no vaccine for dengue fever.

The Florida Keys Mosquito Control District website says the modified genes will disappear from the environment after the mosquitoes carrying it die, resulting in no permanent change to the wild mosquito population. It also says the mosquito species isn't native to the Keys, nor is it an integral food source for other animals.

But Mila de Mier, a concerned real-estate agent, has collected more than 117,700 signatures against the trial on a petition she posted on Change.org.

Dengue fever is a viral disease that inflicts severe flu-like symptoms — the joint pain is so bad it's often called "breakbone fever." It isn't fatal but victims are then susceptible at subsequent exposures to dengue hemorrhagic fever, which can be. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In sickness and in health

Britain's Prince William accompanies his wife, Kate, Duchess of Cambridge, on Thursday as she leaves the King Edward VII Hospital in central London. Kate had been admitted to hospital suffering from severe morning sickness. ANDREW MATTHEWS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Denied asylum

John McAfee hospitalized

Software company founder John McAfee was hospitalized on Thursday after being denied asylum in Guatemala, and his lawyers said they were making a last-ditch effort to keep him from being flown back to Belize for questioning about the killing of a fellow American expatriate.

A doctor examining him for chest pain said McAfee appeared to be suffering from high stress. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Firearm advisory

Harper rejects lax gun-law plans

Prime Minister Stephen Harper is unhappy with recommendations from a firearms advisory committee that would relax laws.

The committee wants some prohibited weapons, including hand guns and assault rifles, reclassified to make them more easily available and is pushing to make licences good for at least 10 years, rather than five. THE CANADIAN PRESS

A Free Syrian Army fighter breaks a hole in the wall of a resident's home on Wednesday during heavy clashes with government forces in Aleppo. NARCISO CONTRERAS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Assad's back against the wall as rebels close in

Syrian crisis. President may have no choice but to fight to the death, diplomat says

The battle for Damascus looms closer. As Syrian rebels encircle President Bashar al Assad's stronghold, he will be aware of the fate met by fellow leaders who misruled their people and faced their wrath.

Libya's Moammar Gadhafi dragged out of a drainpipe, sodomized and shot. Hosni Mubarak of Egypt jailed for life.

The opposition under the loose umbrella of the Free Syrian Army is battling Assad's forces in the south and eastern suburbs, and on the road to the airport as his warplanes hit back. As the noose tightens around Damascus, the seat of family rule since Assad's late father, Hafez, seized power 42 years ago, the president faces tough choices about what to do next. Fight or flee?

An important calculation in his decision is the fate of his Alawite community, a minority who practise an offshoot of Shiite Islam and have been instrumental in suppressing the uprising.

They make up 12 per cent of the population but are the backbone of the regime — 80 per cent of the army's officer class are Alawites.

Assad will fight to the death because the rebels, many of whom are Sunni, would show no mercy, said Nikolaos van Dam, a veteran diplomat with 35 years of experience in Syria.

"This is a battle for death or life," he said. "The regime knows if they are toppled they will simply be killed. It could be a long battle in Damascus."

Violence is spiralling out of control. On Wednesday, 140 people died, the U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported. The government controls only half of Aleppo and several military bases have been overrun by opposition fighters, according to reports by Syrian-based activists.

Speculation is intensifying about how long the regime can hold on. On Monday, Nabil al Araby, head of the Arab League, told Agence France-Presse that the government could fall at "any time."

An internal coup by officers against Assad is not an option because the new leaders would be overthrown by rebels determined to end the Alawite control of state institutions, van Dam said.

Exile in Russia, which has backed him, or to another country, with his wife, Asma, and their three children, is no guarantee he would not be extradited for war crimes in the future, van Dam said.

Assad fleeing the country to save himself would leave Alawite soldiers and civilians at the mercy of rebels, said Joshua Landis, director of Middle East Studies at Oklahoma University who blogs at Syria Comment.

"The Alawites are counting on Assad to protect his people from possible retribution," he said. "He's kept them hostage, in a sense, and now he can't abandon him."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Global perspective

Worries over chemical weapons

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird is urging China and Russia to lean on the regime of Syrian President Bashar al Assad as reports emerge he could unleash chemical weapons on his people.

The UN Security Council has been powerless to censure Syria because of the objections of veto-wielding Russia and China.

"We have called on countries like Russia and China to use whatever leverage they have to prevent this serious crisis from entering a new, disastrous phase," Baird told the House of Commons on Thursday.

Meanwhile, NATO is following through on its plan to place Patriot missiles and troops along Syria's border with Turkey to guard against potential attacks.

The Assad regime denounces this move as psychological warfare and says it won't stop it from defeating the rebel forces it says are terrorists.

Western countries are wary about arming rebels because of fears of extremists in their ranks.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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CUSTOMER SIGNATURE REQUIRED FOR VALIDATION

Canada Post flunks information-request report card — again

Ottawa. Information commissioner finds postal service is still far from achieving transparency

Canada Post vehicles sit outside a sorting depot in the Ville St-Laurent borough of Montreal in this file photo. Information Commissioner Suzanne Legault has found the postal service has made only a bit of improvement over the past two years in how it processes information requests. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

The information watchdog says Canada Post has delivered only marginal improvement on its handling of access-to-information requests.

The post office received an F on its latest report card from Information Commissioner Suzanne Legault after being stamped with red-alert status for its poor performance two years ago.

As reported Wednesday, the CBC got an A for its processing of requests in 2011-12, up from an F for its performance two years ago.

The access law allows people who pay $5 to seek federal files ranging from expense reports and email messages to briefing notes and internal audits.

As an ombudsman for users of the law, Legault has periodically looked at whether key institutions meet their legal obligations of transparency.

In her report card on Canada Post, Legault said although the Crown corporation has taken some steps toward improving its performance, it is still far from achieving optimal compliance with the law.

In a statement, Canada Post said it was disappointed with the F rating, as it had taken steps to improve performance. It committed to doing even better.

During a news conference Thursday, Legault warned that the access-to-information system is vulnerable, especially since the full impact of federal budget slashing has yet to be felt.

The fear is that federal agencies will trim staff responsible for processing requests, creating a risk of backlogs and delays. THE CANADIAN PRESS

BMO survey

More Canadians have RRSPs than this time last year

An increasing number of Canadians surveyed in a BMO study have invested in a registered retirement savings plan this year. The BMO Financial Group poll found 67 per cent of respondents have an RRSP, compared to 61 per cent at this time last year. Nearly three-quarters of respondents plan to contribute the same amount or more to their RRSP than they did last year.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR 100.90¢ (+0.06¢)

TSX 12,151.13 (-6.16)

OIL $86.26 US (-$1.62)

GOLD $1,701.80 US (+$8)

Natural gas: $3.63 (-7¢)
Dow Jones: 13,074.04 (+39.55)

Q4 earnings reports

Strong results for banks clouded by loan outlook

Shares in TD Bank, CIBC and National Bank of Canada all fell Thursday as worries about the outlook for consumer loans amid record household debt overshadowed earnings reports that met or exceeded expectations.

Despite solid fourth-quarter financial results, National Bank fell 1.4 per to $76.60, CIBC gave back 0.47 per cent to $80.14 and TD was off 1.8 per cent, closing at $81.12.

The performance "reflects what investors see as a challenging environment for the banks," said CIBC World Markets analyst Rob Sedran, who forecast a 2013 growth pullback in the sector to between five per cent and six per cent.

He said the banks are bracing for a decline in consumer loans growth, especially in the cooling housing market, as governments tighten mortgage rules and leveraged consumers become more cautious about borrowing.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Bank of Canada.

Low interest rates putting stress on world economy, central bank says

The Bank of Canada is warning that its own low-interest policies and those of central banks around the world are adding another layer of risk to the already stressed global financial system and economy.

The central bank says near-record-level interest rates in place since the 2008-09 recession are taking their toll on insurance companies, pension funds and even hopes of increasing the appetite of investors to take risks in search of higher returns.

In Canada, they have been a prime mover to the other major domestic risk — an overheated housing market and high levels of consumer debt as Canadians take advantage of cheap money to buy real estate.

Bank governor Mark Carney has warned about the dangers of low interest rates sporadically in the past, but this time the bank's governing council has thought the concern grave enough to add it to the list of risks facing Canada and the world. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rona looks to boost long-term profits

A Rona store is shown in Toronto in this July photo. Canada's largest home-improvement retailer says it's preparing to sell non-core assets and make other strategic moves to improve its profitability. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Home improvement. Troubled company has been under pressure to improve bottom line

Rona is hoping to convince investors of the long-term potential of Canada's largest home-improvement chain by making strategic moves, including the sale of non-core assets, to improve profitability after years of focusing on top-line growth.

"This is really managing the business long-term and creating value long-term," acting CEO Dominique Boies said in an interview Thursday after Rona disclosed the Quebec-based company's strategic plan.

Rona Inc. said it will take until Feb. 21 to evaluate what changes need to be made to unlock the "profit potential of a simplified business model."

The troubled company has been under pressure to improve its bottom line, especially since it rejected a lucrative takeover bid by U.S. rival Lowe's.

Earlier, Boies told a news conference that Rona had in fact offered to buy Lowe's Canada in 2011 to reduce overcapacity in the market.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"If someone wants cash-out tomorrow morning, (the plan) might not please them. But we're not managing the business for the next quarter, we're managing the business for the long run — so that's why those strategic priorities are there." Rona CEO Dominique Boies

Supermarkets. Loblaw to spin off real estate, plans public offering mid-2013

Loblaw Companies Ltd. is creating a real-estate investment trust that will be one of the country's largest commercial landlords, an announcement that sent its shares soaring Thursday.

The REIT, which would operate as a subsidiary of Loblaw, would see Canada's biggest supermarket operator contribute real-estate assets with a current market value of more than $7 billion to the venture.

Units of the REIT would then be sold in an initial public offering expected to be completed in mid-2013, subject to regulatory approvals.

"However, it is our intention to retain a significant majority interest in the REIT — over 80 per cent," Loblaw chief financial officer Sarah Davis told a conference call with analysts.

"While we expect to generate funds from the IPO, it is anticipated that the long-term source of capital and the structural advantage of the REIT are the real benefits," Davis added.

Details on pricing and the number of units to be offered in the IPO were not disclosed. Those details typically are determined after a preliminary prospectus is issued and underwriters gauge investor interest.

Loblaw executive chairman Galen G. Weston called Thursday's announcement an exciting development for Loblaw.

"The creation of the REIT is expected to build long-term value both for Loblaw and the REIT," Weston said in the statement.

"This strategic initiative positions Loblaw's core businesses well for the future. We expect the REIT to not only unlock value for our shareholders, but also increase our financial capacity to pay down debt, buy back shares and create a long-term source of capital to invest and grow."

Loblaw isn't the first such chain to make the move. Empire Co. Ltd., operator of the Sobey's supermarket chain, spun off a number of properties into Crombie Real Estate Investment Trust in 2006.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

By the numbers

$7B

The new REIT, or real-estate investment trust, would see Canada's biggest supermarket operator contribute real-estate assets with a current market value of more than $7 billion to the venture.

Quoted

"REITs are recognized as an optimal vehicle to acquire and develop real estate and the size and quality of our real estate assets should be appealing to investors." Loblaw executive chairman Galen G. Weston

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FRACAS ENSUES AFTER F-BOMB DROPPED IN THE HOUSE

THE LIST
Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

TGIF, when you can read the Metro List and relive the parade of wonders that marks yet another zany week in this crazy world we live in.

1 **We are amused.** The next generation of British royals is gestating and poor Kate ends up in the hospital suffering from a right royal bout of morning sickness. After enduring a round-the-clock siege from publicity hounds and pranksters, she emerges looking remarkably well, considering, which proves once again that there will always be an England. There might even be twins.

2 **Nothing amusing here.** The Harper government House leader nearly comes to blows with his NDP counterpart after crossing the floor in a pugnacious manner to deliver a speech composed primarily of the F-word. Who elected these clowns? Oh, right.

3 **Attack of the killer PM.** Why can't we elect somebody cool like Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard who takes time out of her busy schedule to reassure her people that even though the world will end on Dec. 21 (as supposedly predicted by the Mayan calendar), she will continue to stand by them to the bitter end, which will be caused by: "flesh eating zombies, demonic hell beasts or from the total triumph of K-Pop." I think she's kidding, but the Tasmanian devil certainly fits the description of a demonic hell beast.

4 **Speaking of the end of the world.** The poor little misunderstood pop star Justin Bieber is snubbed by the Grammy nominators again in favour of dumb old guys like Jack White, the Black Keys and Maroon 5. As if!

5 **Riot like an Egyptian.** The Muslim Brotherhood, now in power as the Arab Spring turns to winter, passes a constitution that prohibits discrimination against anyone, but removes the phrase: "On the basis of sex, origin, religion and creed." Uh-oh. The Brotherhood's power grab has blown the lid off the uneasy calm on the streets of Cairo, where spring seems a long, long time ago.

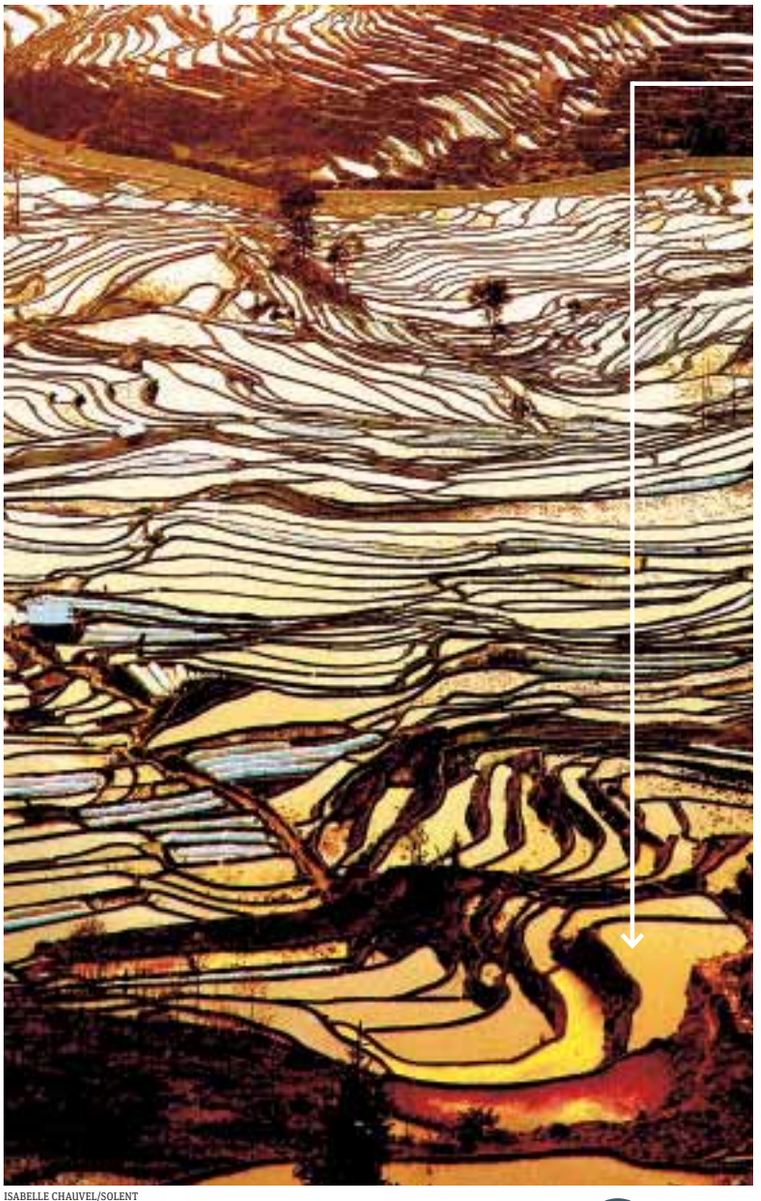
6 **Lest we forget.** This week marks the 23rd anniversary of the cold-blooded murder of 14 women in Montreal by a crazed misogynist. It remains as horrifying as it did then. And yes, every man owns a piece of it.

7 **What would YOU have done?** A bus driver in Vienna finds a sack stuffed with money (390,000 euros, to be precise, worth more than half a million Canadian dollars) and turns it in! It is traced to an elderly lady who left it behind on the bus. For being the world's most painfully honest man, the driver receives a small cash award and, as it's the end of his shift, gets to take the rest of the day off.

Follow The Metro List on Twitter @TheMetroList

Peter Van Loan, the government's House leader, set off a dust-up when he stormed across the floor of the House of Commons to confront his NDP counterpart, Nathan Cullen, on Wednesday. SCREEN GRAB/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The beauty of making rice



ISABELLE CHAUVEL/SOLENT

Landscape photography

Shining spectacle found in rice fields

At first glance, it looks like a stained-glass window, but a wide gaze reveals something grander and more spectacular.

Reflective pools of water at one of the world's largest rice terraces offer stunning views, especially from 1,800 metres up in the mountains. Isabelle Chauvel took the photos in Yuanyang in China's Yunnan Province. METRO

Natural beauty

Man, nature create visual wonder

Chauvel spent from sunrise to sunset taking photos of the handcrafted rice terraces.

"At each time of the day, the colours reflected in the water were different — from bright orange, off-white, earthy brown and verdant green," she said. "It was a true spectacle of what nature has to offer, and the amazing creation mankind has made." METRO

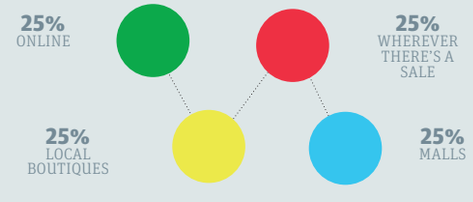
Yuanyang terraces

- Formed by the Hani people more than 1,000 years ago, the fields are still used today for irrigation and farming.
- Fields are irrigated with water from the forest. Water evaporates from fields into clouds — their rain is collected and trapped by mountain forests. In turn, spring water returns to fields.

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

Where do you do the bulk of your shopping?



Twitter

@linds_c_m: Anyone in #winnipeg know where I can find those Chicken Bone candies this year? They're my Grandma's favourite but I can't find them this yr

@littlesrule: When @target_ca opens in Winnipeg, it will be my version of the Ikea opening #cantwait

@DerekOnGlobal: Guy in Winnipeg Square just eyeballed my Crocs. He was not impressed :(

@isabelleklmnk: paying bills off is nice feeling but I just went from tons of money to pennies for another 2 weeks and I still need to get presents.

@honey_child: U of W: where everyone assumes that smell of sage on me is weed. Really, fellow students?

metro

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Even Gerard Butler's trademark rakish smile can't save Playing For Keeps from crashing. HANDOUT

Reel Guys

RICHARD CROUSE AND MARK BRESLIN

Playing for weeps

Laughless. The Reel Guys agree — Gerard Butler's latest attempt at a rom com has upset the Movie Godz

Richard: Mark, I tried hard to pin point exactly the thing that bugged me about Playing for Keeps. I thought long and hard and have come to realize that we don't have enough space here for me to fully explain why this doesn't work, but let's start with the idea that the women are simply treated as sexed-up plot points and move on from there. What did you think?

Mark: Bad enough that the women are treated as sexed-up plot points; unforgivable that they're all just dropped halfway through the movie. For a while, I thought I was watching a classic sexist Tony Curtis movie. Troglodyte, perhaps, but at least it was a bit of fun. Then the film lost its guts and became the story of a man who — sob — just wants to be reunited — sob — with his family. Yeccch!

RC: Yeah. The first half hour is, maybe not exactly promising, but on par for this kind of movie. Then it takes a turn. He has unresolved feelings for his ex-wife and the movie has unresolved plot points falling from the sky like the tears of the Movie Godz who weep when movies this bad get released. Butler's trademarked eye glint and rakish smile are not enough to save this, and someone please tell Uma Thurman to saddle up and work with Quentin Tarantino again.

MB: Speaking of Uma, how much Botox and Restylane is there in the greater Los Angeles area? Because she's left very little for the rest of us. And Zeta-Jones' vamping made me feel sorry for Butler — he probably had to endure take after take of her bad Anne Bancroft impression. Only Judy Greer gets to walk away with her dignity intact — but she always does, doesn't she? And the running gag with the East Indian landlord was embarrassing if not borderline racist. C'mon, Richard, give me something to like about this one!

RC: How about this? Katherine Heigl's not in it and it's not longer. At 106 minutes, it tests the limits of endurance. At 107 minutes or more we might have been able to press charges for cruelty. Judy Greer, however, is great and I'm going to have to ask you to be careful what you say about my Uma in future.

MB: I apologize, Richard. I love her too. It's just that I love her even more when her face can move about.

Synopsis

Gerard Butler plays George Dwyer, former soccer superstar, now sidelined by injuries. Broke and reduced to selling his own memorabilia to make ends meet, he moves to Virginia to be closer to his ex-wife (Jessica Biel) and their son Lewis (Noah Lomax). When the charming Scot begins coaches his son's soccer team all the soccer moms (Judy Greer, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Uma Thurman) throw themselves at him, but he has eyes for only one woman — his ex-wife.

- Richard:
- Mark:

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From horror to comedy, the holidays give us plenty of time for movies

Preview. Metro looks at some of the upcoming flicks hitting theatres near you

UPCOMING COMEDIES

All that holiday family time will leave most of us in need of a few good laughs.

The Guilt Trip
Dec. 19 — This road trip movie starring Seth Rogen and Barbra Streisand aims to plumb the treasure trove of jokes to be made about a mother and son going on a road trip across the country.

This is 40
Dec. 21 — As the "sort of sequel" to 2007's Knocked Up, this Judd Apatow film follows committed couple Debbie and Pete (Leslie Mann and Paul Rudd) as they struggle with aging and each other.

Quartet
Jan. 11 (limited) — Dustin Hoffman directs this comedy about a British retirement home for opera singers and the longtime resident who reunites with a lost love. Pretty much, it's Best Exotic Marigold Quartet.

A Haunted House
Jan. 11 — Marlon Wayans, Cedric the Entertainer and Nick Swardson finally give Paranormal Activity and all those exorcist movies the send-up they deserve.

Movie 43
Jan. 25 — Like those monster ensemble rom coms such as Valentine's Day and New Year's Eve, this comedy packs in a load of stars but promises to be a least a little bit more enjoyable than the aforementioned cheesefests.

SCI-FI, HORROR, ACTION

Despite being the season for high-concept movies, the horror and action genres have plenty to offer this winter.

Texas Chainsaw 3D
Jan. 4 — It's yet another remake of the classic horror flick, but this time the story follows a young woman who journeys to Texas to gather her inheritance, which happens to be in the home of Leatherface.

Mama
Jan. 18 — Annabel and Lucas, a young couple, must raise his two young nieces after being left to fend for themselves by their late parents. They soon discover the girls' dark past, which includes a relentless spirit called Mama.

The Last Exorcism 2: The Beginning of the End
March 1 — If you can get past the film's misleading predecessor, the sequel picks up somewhere down the track as Nell Sweetzer attempts to move on from the past, but is confronted by the sinister force that previously possessed her.

This is 40, starring Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann. HANDOUT

Gangster Squad
Jan. 11 — If Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone aren't enough to get you interested, this film looks set to be one of the best winter releases. The action flick follows the LAPD's struggle with the East Coast Mafia during the '40s and '50s.

Parker
Jan. 25 — Jason Statham steps back into his signature role as an action hero, but this time he plays a thief who forms an alliance with an unlikely friend (Jennifer Lopez) to get revenge on his gang.

Hansel and Gretel Witch Hunters
Jan. 25 — The name pretty much sums it up. The flick is a modern take on the classic fairy tale in which we see Hansel and Gretel on a pursuit for vengeance against the witches who tortured them as children.

Jack Reacher
Dec. 21 — In this adaptation of the Lee Child crime series, Tom Cruise plays an ex-military homicide investigator who steps in to solve a case in which a trained sniper is accused of killing five random innocents.

FILMS LIKELY TO SCORE A GOLDEN STATUETTE

1. Killing Them Softly
Friday — Brad Pitt stars in this dark underworld thriller about a pair of small-time crooks that rob a mobster card game. Soon an enforcer (Pitt) is sent in to make sure that debts are properly paid.

2. Hyde Park on Hudson
Friday (limited) — Bill Murray, Laura Linney and Olivia Williams star in this depiction of the affair between FDR and his distant cousin, Margaret Stuckley, during the landmark visit of the first reigning British royals on American soil.

3. Amour
Dec. 19 (limited) — The winner of the 2012 Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival has yet to leave anything but a stirring impression on those who have seen it. Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke's depiction of an elderly couple facing their mortality guarantees a beautifully heart-rending experience.

4. Zero Dark Thirty
Dec. 19 (limited) — After her Oscar win for 2008's The Hurt Locker, Kathryn Bigelow presents another military drama in the Middle East, this time following the hunt and execution of Osama Bin Laden.

5. The Impossible
Dec. 21 (limited) — Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor star in the true story of one family's struggle to survive the tsunami that struck the coast of Thailand in 2004.

6. Not Fade Away
Dec. 21 (limited) — The mastermind behind The Sopranos, David Chase, writes and directs this nostalgic drama about a fledgling rock band trying to make it big in 1960s New Jersey. And yes, James Gandolfini (formerly known as Tony Soprano) does make an appearance.

7. On the Road
Jan. 18 (limited) — This long-awaited adaptation of Jack Kerouac's beloved beatnik novel stars Garrett Hedlund, Kirsten Dunst and of course a topless-at-one-point Kristen Stewart as a bunch of roustabout rebels in the late '50s, trying to discover what it means to be free.

8. Django Unchained
Dec. 25 — Vigilante justice is the cornerstone of any Quentin Tarantino film, and his 2012 offering promises to deliver the obligatory amount of gratuitous bloodshed. Jamie Foxx plays a freed slave who is assisted in revenge by his mentor, played by Christoph Waltz.

9. Les Miserables
Dec. 25 — Some Oscar wins are practically in the hands of director Tom Hooper already for his adaptation of the Broadway musical, originally penned as a novel by Victor Hugo. By recording the live singing performances of stars Russell Crowe, Hugh Jackman, Anne Hathaway and others, the film stands to break new ground for musical adaptations that eschew the cheese factor.

10. Promised Land
Jan. 4 — Matt Damon, Frances McDormand, John Krasinski and Rosemarie DeWitt star in this film about a natural gas company salesman who experiences a conflict of interest when arriving in a small town that is the next target for prospecting.

11. The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey
Dec. 14 — The first installment of Peter Jackson's latest Tolkien trilogy is sure to pick up at least a few technical awards for its daring method of shooting film at twice the speed of regular film (48 frames per second, as opposed to the traditional 24). METRO

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Richard Armitage embarks on an unexpected journey

The Hobbit. Actor credits Tolkien with pushing his imagination and leading him to acting

RICHARD CROUSE
scene@metronews.ca

Richard Armitage plays an exiled dwarf king in The Hobbit. HANDOUT

In The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, British actor Richard Armitage plays Thorin Oakenshield, exiled dwarf king. He's a newcomer to the Peter Jackson vision of Middle Earth — which began with the three Lord of the Rings films, and continues with a new Hobbit trilogy — but no stranger to the world of author J.R.R. Tolkien.

"I am one of those people who have loved the book," he says. "I remember being read The Hobbit by a teacher in primary school who did amazing voices, God bless her. I picked up the book myself and started reading it, which was kind of rare because normally I would have to be forced to read."

He missed the chance to audition for the first set of films, but when The Hobbit came around he jumped at the chance. "I had no idea how I would fit into that story because the idea of playing a dwarf just wasn't on my radar. I'm six foot three and a half, so why on earth would I play a dwarf?"

It wasn't the first time he was excited to bring the fantasy of Middle Earth to life. "I was in a stage production of The Hobbit when I was 13," he says, "which I leapt at. It's weird how you have that reaction when someone says they're doing a stage production, at 13 to go, 'I've read that book. I love it. Let me be in it.' I had the same feeling when they were making this movie."

He draws a straight line between his early love of Tolkien and his current profession.

"My imagination was totally stimulated by Tolkien's world and I think once you've had your imagination stimulated in that way, every book you ever read you dramatize in your head. You hear character's voices and visualize that world."

Drama

Deadfall

Director. Martin Donovan

Stars. Eric Bana, Olivia Wilde

About the most interesting aspect of Deadfall is that it was apparently filmed in a blizzard. Oscar-winning filmmaker Stefan Ruzowitzky (The Counterfeiters) may have visual skill but this derivative, contrived thriller about two sibling thieves (Bana, Wilde) that split up in snowbound Michigan only to reunite at a doomed Thanksgiving dinner complete with hostages is so dour, I'd assumed it was farce if every character weren't so utterly unaffecting.

STEVE GOW

Drama

Mad Ship

Director. David Mortin

Stars. Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Rachel Blanchard, Gil Bellows

A Norwegian family weathers the prairie droughts and economic woes of 1920s western Canada in David Mortin's touching immigrant story. Tomas Sorensen (Nikolaj Lie Kaas) crosses the Atlantic in hope of a better life, but after his crops are destroyed by a dust storm, he must leave the fields to find work in the city. When his wife Solveig (Line Verdal) takes matters into her own hands in his absence, Tomas's Canadian Dream quickly becomes a nightmare. Although Mad Ship occasionally steers off-course with a touch of melodrama, parched landscapes lend themselves to a beautifully-shot film. **MANORI RAVINDRAN**

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The first eco-horror movie

Movies. Oscar winner Barry Levinson has made the Paranormal Activity of environmental movies. Get ready to be scared by The Bay

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

On July 4, 2009, tiny monsters popped out of the Chesapeake Bay near Washington D.C. and horrifically killed innocent people, leaving them battered, bloodied and infected. True story? No, but new movie The Bay pretends it is. The flick is filmed in found footage style à la The Blair Witch Project and Paranormal Activity. Hidden inside is an environmental message: Our waters are toxic. Oscar-winner Barry Levinson created the film, leading us to ask:

A found footage movie seems a strange choice for an Oscar winner. What made you want to do it?
Well, I would not have thought to do a movie like this. It was an evolution. I was approached by the people in Maryland to do a documentary about the Chesapeake Bay because it's 40 per cent dead. I looked into it, I found out that PBS had done a documentary that was terrific, but ultimately nobody really responded or cared or thought that we ought to do something about this largest estuary in the U.S. that's 40 per cent dead, filled with a toxic soup. Then a couple of weeks later I thought, maybe what you need to do is if you took all the facts and you pulled it into a story ... and you create characters, maybe the facts will become more frightening to us.

Is that the movie equivalent of sneaking medication into someone's dessert?
The information becomes vital to the storytelling. It becomes one and the same; it's connective that way. And so, I think it adds to the experience because it adds the credibility.

"I'll never swim in the bay again." Movie still of an infested patient. LIONSGATE

What are some of the conditions in the movie that come from those facts?
Well, take the drinking water. We know the filtration systems in the United States are basically D-rated. That's what they say, it met the standards. It's substandard, but it met the standards. We know our water quality is a D-minus. And we go, "Well that's good enough."

What about the monsters in the film?
They're really isopods and they do exist. They're not in the Chesapeake Bay, but they're in the Atlantic. In the scene where the oceanographer holds one up to the camera and says, "This is sea lice," that's not a CGI shot. That's a fish that has sea lice on it in South Carolina where we were filming. We've got a lot of stuff that's got a reality base to it that makes it even scarier.

Are there any efforts now to correct the situation in the Chesapeake Bay?
They say there are efforts to fix it. You could correct the damage if you put a real effort forward. Now they're doing some work, so I won't say they're not doing anything. But they're not doing what you have to do. You've got to be in an emergency mode. And I mean, it's all doable.
You can correct it. It's just, "Do you have the will to want to do it or not?"

The Bay is on iTunes now.
www.thebay-movie.com

The money behind Green Cinema

Hollywood is filled with activists behind a good cause, especially the environment. But the history of Green Cinema has had a spotty track record.

It often works best when the environmental message is inherent to the story, especially if the movie is based on actual events, like Erin Brockovich or last year's Big Miracle, about one Alaska town's efforts to free a family of whales. And a fictional movie can take its cues from real life, as in Richard Linklater's Fast Food Nation, about the horrors of McDonald's.

Hollywood triumphs when it mixes a eco message into mainstream entertainment, like James Cameron's Avatar (biggest movie ever), disaster flick The Day After Tomorrow (a smash) or Pixar's adorable Wall-E (made $520 million worldwide). This year, director Barry Levinson tries using a gore-filled horror movie, The Bay. Made for a small sum, it'll probably make back its money.

Julia Roberts as Erin. UNIVERSAL

There's often no substitute for the truth, and eco-themed documentaries are a long and proud tradition. Famous ones include Al Gore's Oscar-winning An Inconvenient Truth and Waste Land, a Brazilian movie on making art from Earth's largest landfill.

Meanwhile, Gus Van Sant's Promised Land on controversial hydraulic drilling, or fracking, is out next month and in time for Oscar consideration. But will it be a hit or a flop? **NED EHRBAR**

Green heroes and zeroes

Hero

Gisele Bundchen

The Brazilian model was named the Best Green International Celebrity at last year's Green Awards, and since 2009 is UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador.

Hero

Daryl Hannah

The U.S. actress-activist has been arrested while at protests for eco groups. A vegan and the driver of a biodiesel car, Hannah records video blogs on sustainability.

Hero

Mark Ruffalo

Green on screen (as Hulk in The Avengers), green in life, the U.S. actor stopped by Metro's New York office for Earth Day last year to guest-edit the newspaper.

Zero

Mariah Carey

Airmiles addict diva is famous for an overindulgence of her private jet. She's even been known to fly a personal trainer into New York just for a workout.

Zero

John Travolta

His passion for aviation leaves a hefty carbon footprint. One group estimated that the actor's hobby generates an average of 800 tons of carbon emissions a year.

Zero

Toby Keith

The U.S. country music star warrants a mention for no other reason than releasing the song Red Solo Cup, which celebrates the popular plastic drinking vessel. **NED EHRBAR**

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Killing Them Softly (18A) Fri 3:30-5:45-8:20-10:40 Sat-Sun 1-3:25-5:45-8:20-10:40 Mon-Thu 3:30-5:45-8:20-10:40
Life of Pi 3D (PG) Fri 3:35-6:30-9:50 Sat-Sun 12:25-3:20-6:30-9:50 Mon-Thu 3:50-7:05-10:05 Fri 6:15-9:30 Sat-Sun 3-6:15-9:30 Mon-Thu 5-8:15
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri 5:15-7:45-10:20 Sat-Sun 12:05-2:40-5:15-7:45-10:20 Mon-Thu 4:35-7:40-10:10
Rise of the Guardians (G) Sat-Sun 12:10
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri 5:15-7:45-10:15 Sat-Sun 2:40-5:15-7:45-10:15 Mon-Thu 4:15-6:55-9:35
Skyfall (14A) Fri 3:50-7:10-10:50 Sat-Sun 12:35-3:50-7:10-10:50 Mon-Thu 3:35-6:50-9:50 Fri 7-10:30 Sat-Sun 3:30-7-10:30 Mon-Thu 7-10:15
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) Fri 5:30-8:10-10:45 Sat-Sun 12:15-2:55-5:30-8:10-10:45 Mon-Thu 4:35-7:40-10:10 Fri-Sat 4:30-8-11:10 Sun 4:30-8 Mon-Wed 6-9:15 Thu 6
Wreck-It Ralph (G) Sat-Sun 12:20
Wreck-It Ralph 3D (G) Fri 5:25-7:55-10:25 Sat-Sun 2:50-5:25-7:55-10:25 Mon-Wed 4:45-7:30-10 Thu 4:45-7:30

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Brave (PG) Fri 7:20 Sat-Sun 2:20-4:50-7:20 Mon-Thu 5:30
Hotel Transylvania 3D (G) Fri 6:40-9 Sat-Sun 1:50-4:30-6:40-9 Mon-Thu 5:30-8
Ice Age: Continental Drift (G) Sat-Sun 1:20 Ice Age: Continental Drift 3D (G) Fri 6:30 Sat-Sun 3:30-5:40-8 Mon-Thu 5:10
Resident Evil: Retribution (14A) Fri 9:20 Sat-Sun 10:10 Mon-Thu 7:30
Seven Psychopaths (18A) Fri 7:20-10:10 Sat-Sun 2:10-4:40-7:20-10:10 Mon-Thu 5:50-8:10
Silent Hill: Revelation 3D (18A) Fri 7:40-10:15 Sat-Sun 2:30-5-7:40-10:15 Mon-Thu 6-8:40
Talaash (14A) Fri 6:50-9:45 Sat-Sun 1-3:50-6:50-9:45 Mon-Thu 5:30-8
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Red Dawn (PG) Fri 7:40-10:10 Sat-Sun 12:40-2:55-5:20-7:40-10:10 Mon-Thu 5:40-8:15
Rise of the Guardians (G) Sat-Sun 12:30 Mon-Thu 5:10
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri 7:30-10 Sat-Sun 2:50-5:10-7:30-10 Mon-Wed 7:50 Thu 7:25
Skyfall (14A) Fri 6:45-10 Sat-Sun 12:30-3:40-6:45-10 Mon-Thu 5:30-8:30
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) Fri 7:20-10:15 Sat-Sun 1:40-4:30-7:20-10:15 Mon-Thu 5:20-8:10
Wreck-It Ralph (G) Fri 7:10-9:45 Sat-Sun 1:10-3:50-7:10-9:45 Mon-Thu 5-8

City Cinema - Northgate
1399 McPhillips,
204-334-6234

24/7 in Love (PG) Fri 7-10 Sat-Sun 1:20-4:10-7-10 Mon-Thu 5:40-8:30
Alex Cross (14A) Fri-Sun 9:40 Mon-Thu 7:50 Argo (14A) Fri 7:10-9:50 Sat-Sun 1:40-4:20-7:10-9:50 Mon-Thu 5:10-8:10
Brave (PG) Fri 7:20 Sat-Sun 2:20-4:50-7:20 Mon-Thu 5:30
Hotel Transylvania 3D (G) Fri 6:40-9 Sat-Sun 1:50-4:30-6:40-9 Mon-Thu 5:30-8
Ice Age: Continental Drift (G) Sat-Sun 1:20 Ice Age: Continental Drift 3D (G) Fri 6:30 Sat-Sun 3:30-5:40-8 Mon-Thu 5:10
Resident Evil: Retribution 3D (14A) Fri 9:20 Sat-Sun 10:10 Mon-Thu 7:30
Seven Psychopaths (18A) Fri 7:20-10:10 Sat-Sun 2:10-4:40-7:20-10:10 Mon-Thu 5:50-8:10
Silent Hill: Revelation 3D (18A) Fri 7:40-10:15 Sat-Sun 2:30-5-7:40-10:15 Mon-Thu 6-8:40
Talaash (14A) Fri 6:50-9:45 Sat-Sun 1-3:50-6:50-9:45 Mon-Thu 5:20-8:20
Famous Players Kildonan Place
1555 Regent Ave W, 204-663-2166
Flight (18A) Fri 6:50-9:55 Sat-Sun 12:45-3:45-6:50-9:55 Mon-Thu 5:15-8:20
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) Thu 10
Red Dawn (PG) Fri 7:40-10:10 Sat-Sun 12:40-2:55-5:20-7:40-10:10 Mon-Thu 5:40-8:15
Rise of the Guardians (G) Sat-Sun 12:30 Mon-Thu 5:10
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri 7:30-10 Sat-Sun 2:50-5:10-7:30-10 Mon-Wed 7:50 Thu 7:25
Skyfall (14A) Fri 6:45-10 Sat-Sun 12:30-3:40-6:45-10 Mon-Thu 5:30-8:30
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) Fri 7:20-10:15 Sat-Sun 1:40-4:30-7:20-10:15 Mon-Thu 5:20-8:10
Wreck-It Ralph (G) Fri 7:10-9:45 Sat-Sun 1:10-3:50-7:10-9:45 Mon-Thu 5-8

Grant Park 8 Cinemas
1120 Grant Ave.,
204-453-4084

Anna Karenina (PG) Fri 3:50-7-10 Sat-Sun 12:50-3:50-7-10 Mon-Thu 3:50-7-10
Flight (18A) , Fri 3:30-6:40-9:45 , Sat-Sun 12:15-3:30-6:40-9:45 , Mon-Thu 3:30-6:40-9:45
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) , , Thu 10
Life of Pi (PG) , Sat-Sun 12:40
Life of Pi 3D (PG) , Fri-Thu 3:40-6:55-10:05
Lincoln (PG) , Fri 3:15-6:35-6:50-9:50 , Sat-Sun 12-3:15-6:35-6:50-9:50 , Mon-Thu 3:15-6:35-6:50-9:50
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri 4-6:50-9:30 Sat-Sun 1:10-4-6:50-9:30 Mon-Thu 4-6:50-9:30
Rise of the Guardians (G) , Sat-Sun 1
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) , Fri-Wed 4:10-7:20-9:45 , Thu 4:10-7:20
Skyfall (14A) , Fri 3:25-6:45-9:55 , Sat-Sun 12:10-3:25-6:45-9:55 , Mon-Thu 3:25-6:45-9:55 The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) , Fri 4:15-7:10-10:15 , Sat-Sun 12:30-4:15-7:10-10:15 , Mon-Thu 4:15-7:10-10:15

Landmark Globe Cinema
393 Portage Ave,
204-943-1583

Killing Them Softly (18A) Fri 7:15-9:40 Sat-Sun 1:15-3:40-7:15-9:40 Mon-Thu 7:15-9:40 Life of Pi (PG) Sat-Sun 4
Life of Pi 3D (PG) Fri 6:50-9:50 Sat-Sun 1:10-6:50-9:50 Mon-Thu 6:50-9:50
Mad Ship (STC) Fri 7-9:15 Sat-Sun 1-3:15-7-9:15 Mon-Thu 7-9:15

Landmark Towne Cinema 8
301 Notre Dame Avenue,
204-947-2848

Chasing Ice (G) Fri 7:15-9:15 Sat-Sun 1:15-3:15-7:15-9:15 Mon-Wed 7:15-9:15 Thu 7:15 Deadfall (18A) Fri 7:15-9:30 Sat-Sun 1-3:30-7:15-9:30 Mon-Thu 7:15-9:30
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (PG) Thu 10
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) Thu 10 Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri 7-9:30 Sat-Sun 1-3:45-7-9:30 Mon-Wed 7-9:30 Thu 7 Red Dawn (STC) Fri 7:15-9:30 Sat-Sun 1:15-3:30-7:15-9:30 Mon-Thu 7:15-9:30
Rise of the Guardians (G) Sat-Sun 3:15
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri 7-9:15 Sat-Sun 12:45-7-9:15 Mon-Thu 7-9:15
Skyfall (14A) Fri 6:40-9:40 Sat-Sun 12:40-3:40-6:40-9:40 Mon-Thu 6:40-9:40
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) Fri 7-9:30 Sat-Sun 12:45-3:30-7-9:30 Mon-Thu 7-9:30
Wreck-It Ralph (G) Sat-Sun 3:45
Wreck-It Ralph 3D (G) Fri 6:45-9:15 Sat-Sun 1:15-6:45-9:15 Mon-Thu 6:45-9:15

SilverCity Polo Park
815 St. James Street,
204-774-1001

A Christmas Story (STC) Sat 11
Flight (18A) Fri-Sun 1:25-4:30-7:35-10:40 Mon-Tue 12:35-3:45-7:05-10:20 Wed 12:35-3:45-7:05-10:20 Thu 12:35-3:45-7:05-10:20 The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey — An IMAX 3D Experience (PG) Thu 10
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) Thu 10
Killing Them Softly (18A) Fri-Sat 12:45-3:15-5:45-8:15-10:45 Sun 12:45-3:15-5:45-8:15-10:40 Mon-Wed 12:25-2:55-5:25-8-10:35 Thu 1:10-3:35-5:35-8-9:30
Life of Pi 3D (PG) Fri-Sat 1:30-4:35-7:40-10:45 Sun 1:30-4:35-7:40-10:35 Mon-Wed 1:10-4:15-7:20-10:25 Thu 12:20-3:10-6-10:40 Lincoln (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:50-7:10-10:30
The Metropolitan Opera: Un Ballo in Maschera Live (STC) Sat 11:55
Miracle on 34th Street (STC) Sun 12:45 Wed 7 Pitch Perfect (PG) Fri-Sat 2-4:35-7:25-10:05 Sun 4:35-7:25-10:05 Mon-Wed 2-4:35-7:25-10:05 Thu 2-4:35-10:05
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri-Sun 12:05-2:40-5:15-7:50-10:30 Mon-Tue 1:50-4:30-7:15-10 Wed 4:30-7:15-10 Thu 1:50-4:30-7:15-10 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
Red Dawn (PG) Fri-Sat 12:55-3:25-5:55-8:25-10:55 Sun 12:55-3:25-5:55-8:25-10:45 Mon-Thu 12:20-2:45-5:15-7:45-10:15
Rise of the Guardians (G) Fri 12:05 Sat 11-12:05 Sun 12:05 Mon-Wed 1:55 Thu 1
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri-Sun 2:35-5:05-7:35-10:05 Mon-Wed 4:20-6:55-9:30 Thu 3:20-5:40-7:55
Royal Opera House: The Nutcracker (STC) Thu 7:30
Silver Linings Playbook (14A) Fri-Sun 1:20-4:20-7:20-10:25 Mon-Wed 1:05-4:05-7:10-10:15 Thu 1:05-4:05-7:10-10:25
Skyfall (14A) Fri 12:20-3:35-7-10:20 Sat 11-12:20-3:35-7-10:20 Sun 12:20-3:35-7-10:20 Mon-Tue 12:30-3:40-7-10:20 Wed 4:10-7:20-10:30 Thu 12:30-3:40-7-10:20 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
Skyfall: The IMAX Experience (14A) Fri-Sat 12:50-4:10-7:30-10:50 Sun 12:50-4:10-7:30-10:40 Mon-Wed 1-4:10-7:30-10:45 Thu 12:20-3:30-6:35
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) Fri 11:50-1:40-2:30-4:30-5:10-7:20-8-10:10-10:50 Sat 11:20-2-4:40-5:10-7:20-8-10:10-10:50 Sun 11:35-1:40-2:20-4:30-5:10-7:20-8-10:10-10:45 Mon-Wed 1:40-2:10-4:30-5-7:20-7:50-10:10-10:40 Thu 12:25-1:40-3-4:30-7:20-10:10-10:40
Wreck-It Ralph (G) Fri-Thu 12:20
Wreck-It Ralph 3D (G) Fri 2:55-5:30-8:05-10:35 Sat 11:05-2:55-5:30-8:05-10:35 Sun-Wed 2:55-5:30-8:05-10:35 Thu 2:55-5:30-8:05

SilverCity St. Vital
110-1225 St Mary's Rd,
204-256-3901

A Christmas Story (STC) Sat 11
Here Comes the Boom (PG) Fri-Tue 5:05-10:05 Wed 5-10:10 Thu 3-7:50
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) Thu 10
Killing Them Softly (18A) Fri-Sat 12:45-3:15-5:45-8:15-10:45 Sun 12:45-3:15-5:35-8-10:30 Mon-Thu 12:45-3:15-5:40-8:05-10:30 Life of Pi 3D (PG) Fri-Sun 1:30-4:30-7:25-10:20 Mon-Tue 1:30-4:20-7:15-10:10 Wed 7:20 Thu 10:20 Wed 12:20-3-10:10 Thu 12:20-3:20-6:30
The Metropolitan Opera: Un Ballo in Maschera Live (STC) Sat 11:55
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri-Sun 12:05-2:40-5:15-7:50-10:30 Mon-Wed 2:40-5:15-7:50-10:20 Thu 4:40-7:20-9:50 Star & Strollers Screening Thu 1
Red Dawn (PG) Fri 12:55-3:20-5:40-8-10:25 Sat 1:20-3:35-5:50-8:10-10:40 Sun 12:55-3:20-5:40-8:05-10:25 Mon-Wed 12:55-3:20-5:40-8-10:20 Thu 2:30-4:50-10:25 Rise of the Guardians (G) Fri 12:25 Sat 11:10-12:25 Sun 12:30 Mon-Wed 12:25 Star & Strollers Screening Thu 1
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri-Wed 2:45-5:10-7:35-10 Thu 3:15-5:30-7:55
Royal Opera House: The Nutcracker (STC) Thu 7:30
Skyfall (14A) Fri-Sun 12:55-4:05-7:20-10:30 Mon-Thu 12:50-4-7:20-10:30 Fri-Thu 12:30-6:50
Taken 2 (14A) Fri 12:25-2:45-7:40 Sat 7:40 Sun 12:30-2:45-7:40 Mon-Tue 12:25-2:45-7:40 Wed 12:25-2:45 Thu 12:40-5:30
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) Fri 2:20-4-5-7:45-10:05-10:35 Sat 11:30-2:20-4-5-7:45-10:05-10:35 Sun 12:20-2:55-4-5:30-8:05-10:05-10:35 Mon-Wed 2-4-4:40-7:30-10-10:30 Thu 2-4-4:40-7:25-10:05
Wreck-It Ralph (G) Fri-Sun 12:10 Mon-Thu 12:20
Wreck-It Ralph 3D (G) Fri-Sun 2:55-5:30-8:05-10:35 Mon-Thu 2:55-5:30-8-10:30

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Mars plans to play until his fingers bleed

New album. The out-of-the-box musician talks about what went into making his latest effort, Unorthodox Jukebox

NINA ETTRUP
Metro World News

Bruno Mars is anything but your standard musician. JAMES MOONEY

Bruno Mars was born and raised in sunny Hawaii. He's sold millions of records. And he has those chocolatey brown eyes. His shirt is mostly unbuttoned and he speaks slowly while stirring milk into a huge cup of coffee and settling into a huge, brown leather couch.

Relaxed, cool and confident — that's how he appears while talking about his new album, Unorthodox Jukebox. And he probably is, at least today. But that's not how he feels all the time. The 27-year-old singer had a very hard time getting started on the album, the successor to his hugely successful debut Doo-Wops & Hooligans from 2010.

"I went through writer's block — two months of being uninspired. It was just weeks and weeks of going back into the studio and trying to write something that means something. It's not easy. It gets scary, and I was afraid I'd never be able to write anything ever again," says the singer.

"Suddenly, for some reason, it started flowing again. That part of my brain turned back on," he explains.

Bruno Mars thinks that it was the many months that he spent on tour after releasing Doo-Wops & Hooligans that made it difficult to get back into song-writing mode.

"Maybe it was because I was coming off tour and I was trying to get my mind to work like that again. You have such a repetitive life on tour, travelling and singing the same songs over and over again. When you take all of that away, the transition … You've been playing the same chords and now you're trying to teach yourself new chords," he says.

Even though he's named after professional wrestler Bruno Sammartino, music, not sports, was No.1 in Bruno Mars' childhood home in Hawaii.

Both his parents are singers, and he's been performing in front of a real audience — not just mom and dad in the backyard — since he was three or four years old.

He's had the same idols since then too.

He's still a fan of Michael Jackson, Prince, Freddie Mercury and Sting — and yes, his new hit song Locked Out of Heaven may sound somewhat like The Police, he admits.

"There's an '80s kind of a feel to it. It wasn't planned, but my love for these chord progressions and the synth drum machines that were popularized in the 80s came out on this album much more than on the first one. I feel like … in the '80s there were singers, real strong singers," he says.

"Today, it's more like 'the era of computer-programmed.' There's a beauty in that too — I'm not a snob that's gonna say, 'This is not real music.'"

It's just not his taste. Bruno Mars likes the guys who played their instruments, till — as Bryan Adams said — their fingers bled. And that's how he's made a career for himself too.

A little more from Bruno

One more quote:

- **On the title of the album Unorthodox Jukebox.** "I was always told that my music was too unorthodox, too all over the place. That really chapped my ass, because I'm all over the place. The way I write music and all the music that I enjoy is what makes me unorthodox. To the suits that's a bad thing, because they have to think about marketing and what radio station will play this song and who will listen to it. Is it a young audience? An urban audience? A rock audience? I never understood all these questions."

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Industry relying on Ke$ha, Bruno Mars, Angels & Airwaves

SOUND CHECK
Alan Cross
scene@metronews.ca

We've almost reached the end of the 2012 album release season. Will these albums help keep sales ahead of last year?

Dirty Love/ Ke$ha feat. Iggy Pop

This was one of the tracks that leaked early from Ke$ha's Warrior album. Includes the lyrics "Cockroaches do it in garbage cans/ Rug merchants do it in Afghanistan."

Young Girls/ Bruno Mars

The second video from Unorthodox Jukebox, which is due out on Tuesday. His label is hoping for a No. 1 debut.

Reel 1 (Diary)/ Angels & Airwaves

One of the very last big-name releases of the year will come with Tom Hoppus' (Blink 182) side project on Dec. 18. Stomping the Phantom Brake Pedal is officially a double EP of "evolved" and "reimagined" tracks.

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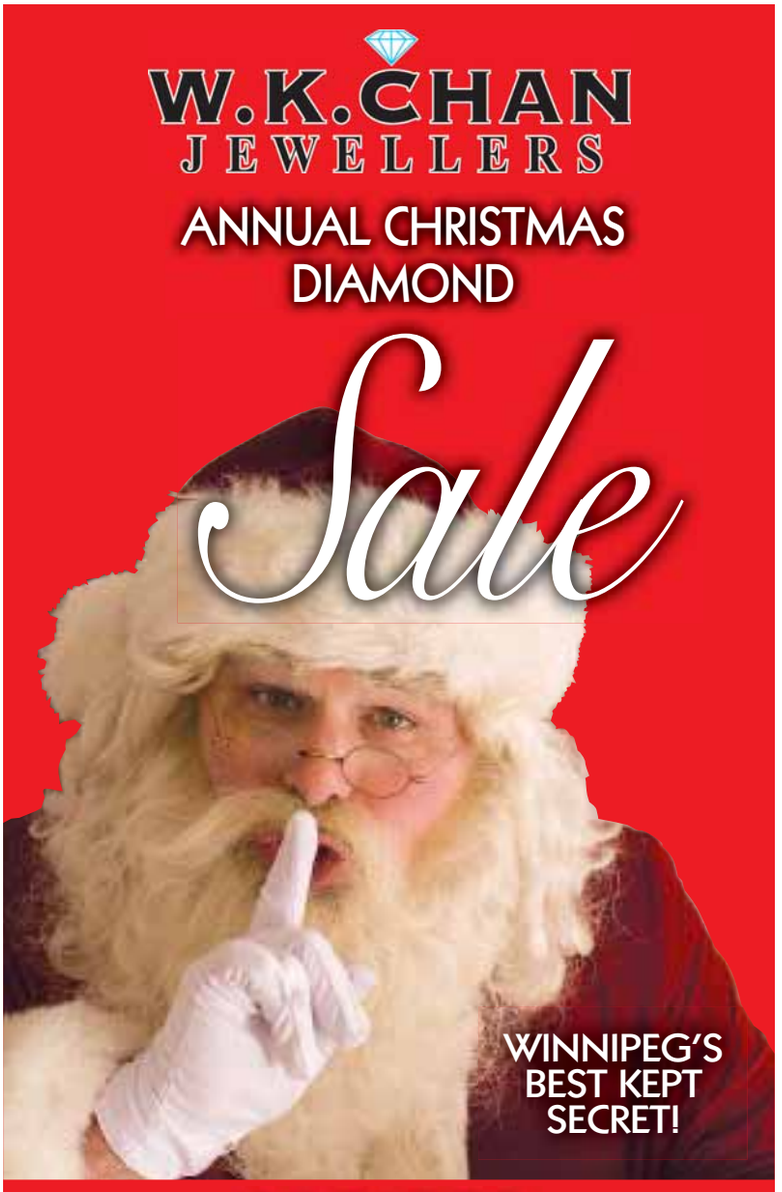
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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

'Tis the season in the city for these two starlets

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Sarah Jessica Parker and Naomi Watts not only juggle A-list acting careers as well as their families, but they also somehow find the time to take advantage of New York City's many cultural opportunities (annoying, I know).

"We have incredible museums that are affordable and free, we have tons of wonderful ballet companies. I try to do all these things with my children. Simply walking up and down the streets of New York — there's art everywhere, there's things to talk about," said Parker Thursday night at the New 42 Gala, which honoured the Australia Council for the Arts as well as supported the New Victory Education Program. Naomi Watts — who was there with her children, Sasha, 5, and Samuel, 4, and partner Liev Schreiber — agrees. "We've done a few shows with the kids. It's a treat," she said.

But lest you think Parker and Watts are so perfect they only fill their childrens' heads with intellectual goodness, rest assured both women have fallen prey to holiday craziness.

"We're pretty conventional," says Parker about her holidays with her family, which includes husband, actor Matthew Broderick, son James, 10, and twin daughters Marion and Tabitha, 3. "We like to be together, we like to eat, we play Yankee Trader."

Meanwhile, it seems like the Liev/Watts household has fallen victim to the holiday terrorist that is Elf on the Shelf. (For those of you lucky enough not to know what this is, the Elf on the Shelf is a doll who allegedly spies on your kids at Christmas time and has to be moved night after night by the parents. It's great for about a hot minute.)

"I think they're getting into the whole Santa Claus thing," Watts said about her little family. "They've got the Elf on the Shelf and every night he moves." WITH REPORTING BY OLIVIA MORROW

Kate Middleton

Sovereign stork to arrive in the summer

It's going to be a summer baby for Kate Middleton, according to Life & Style. "She's due in July, which is a month full of significance for William," a source says. "His mother, Diana, was born on July 1, and his parents got married on July 29." As for who the godparents will be for the new prince or princess? Signs are pointing to Prince Harry and Pippa Middleton, according to ABC News. "Kate is very close to her sister, Pippa, and William is infinitely, in the same way, close to Prince Harry. So they are the obvious choice," royal contributor Victoria Arbiter Brown says. "They were the best man and the chief bridesmaid at their wedding, they're well-trusted, they're family."

A second sleepover for Swift and Styles

Taylor Swift ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

The fledging romance between Taylor Swift and One Direction star Harry Styles appears to be heating up pretty quickly, if their latest rendezvous are any indication. Styles was spotted trying to sneak into the New York City hotel where Swift is staying, an overnight bag over his shoulder, according to Hollyscoop. That's the second night in a row the young music stars have spent together at the hotel this week.

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Pet Health Fact+

Every year thousands of pets are lost or stolen. Only a small percentage of pets that are taken to animal shelters are reunited with their owners. One reason for this is that animals do not have identification. Collar ID tags are easily lost and can be removed. Identification tattoos may become blurred or become troublesome to decipher. A microchip is the best way to ensure your pet has permanent identification. Insertion is quick and does not require anesthesia. If your pet is lost, the microchip is detected by a scanner used by veterinarians, animal shelters, and other pet-related agencies.

Damage control a breeze after Sheen

Angus T. Jones

The recent hubbub over Angus T. Jones urging fans to stop watching his hit sitcom, Two and a Half Men, and calling the show "filth" was apparently nothing the folks at CBS couldn't handle, at least according to network head Les Moonves. "I don't think (the Angus situation has) quite been resolved, but after going through what we went through with Charlie Sheen, it's been a piece of cake," Moonves says in a statement to TMZ.

Danny and Rhea's relationship as sunny as always?

Despite announcing in October that they'd separated, Danny DeVito and Rhea Pearlman aren't actually all that separated — at least according to DeVito. When asked by Extra how he's adjusting to life as a single man, DeVito says, "It's not something you adjust to. Rhea and I are really close. Actually still together, just separate, but together." In fact, DeVito insists divorce may not be in the cards for the Cheers alums. "We're working on it," he says when asked if a reconciliation might be on the way.

Danny DeVito

Twitter

@ParisJackson
that fantastic moment when Bohemian Rhapsody comes on the radio and you just blast it and rock out so hard you just forget all you problems

@samantharonson
If u start a tweet with- I'm not a hater, but- um- YOU'RE A HATER

@WhitneyCummings
Lizzy Caplan doesn't have Twitter, so go to her house to tell her she's awesome: 6750 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90028

@MarkDuplass
anybody know where i put my ability to spell words correctly? i swear, i just had it.

Liquid Assets

Restore port's regal nature

LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

If there's a liquid silver lining to winter being around the corner, it's that port season has officially arrived.

This time of year provides chilly nights and the opportunity for roaring fires, both perfect companions to a glass of the king of Portuguese wine.

For some of you, port carries more baggage than the Kardashian sisters on a three- day vacation. The term has been used by countries the world over (including Canada) on the labels of generic, booze-infused wines that totally take the regal name of port in vain.

Most have stopped, and true port is finding a new audience as a luxurious meal ender or cigar companion (if you're so inclined).

Choosing the port that's right for you can be a struggle. Most are expensive and not all are appropriate for drinking right away.

A Late Bottled Vintage style, like Taylor's 2005 LBV ($16.45 to $24.99), is a mid-priced blend of wines all produced in the same year. Smooth, with deep, dark berry fruit, an LBV is drinkable right out of the bottle, will keep for several weeks once opened and makes a great introduction to the world of port. **PRICES REFLECT THE RANGE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE IN ALL PROVINCES.**

Step up fancy factor with Prime Veal Chop

Prime Veal Chop with Pesto and Feta Cheese. It may be hard to believe, but this delicious recipe takes just three ingredients to make

ROSE REISMAN
for more, visit
rosereisman.com

I created this recipe for The Pickle Barrel chain of restaurants in Toronto.

The veal chop is beautifully lean and tender.

The combination of pesto and feta complements it beautifully and gives the dish a Mediterranean twist.

This goes well with grilled vegetables and mashed potatoes.

Ingredients

4 portions
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 14 minutes

- four 6- to 8-oz prime veal chops with bone in (also known as the French cut)
- 2 tbsp pesto
- 2 tbsp crumbled feta cheese

This recipe serves four. BRIAN MACDONALD, FROM ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

1. Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line a baking sheet with foil and spray with cooking oil.

2. Spray a non-stick skillet with cooking oil and place over medium-high heat. Cook the veal on both sides just until seared and browned, approximately 2 minutes per side. Place on the prepared baking sheet.

3. Spread both sides of the veal with pesto sauce and sprinkle with the feta, patting the cheese down firmly.

4. Bake for approximately 10 minutes, until the internal temperature registers about 135 F for medium-rare, or to desired doneness. Let rest 5 minutes before serving. **ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN**

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Université de Saint-Boniface

Gingerbread Cake ushers in the holiday baking season

There is no subtle way to say this. This cake screams Christmas.

To start with, it's gingerbread, the aroma alone of which is embedded in the definition of this holiday. That aroma, of course, is paired with an ultra-rich, moist cake that is at once dense, but also light. Then there is the sugar crisp caramelized sides of the cake, which only add to the tender, sweet lemony pear slices that crown the cake.

Ingredients

- Zest and juice of 2 lemons
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 3/4 cup packed light brown sugar, divided
- 3 large pears, peeled, cored and sliced
- 1/2 cup golden raisins
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup molasses
- 1 tbsp dry ground ginger
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground cardamom
- 1/2 tsp ground allspice
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 2/3 cups all-purpose flour

This recipe serves 16. MATTHEW MEAD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

1. In a skillet over low heat, combine the lemon juice and zest with the wine and 1/2 cup of the brown sugar. Add the pears and bring to a slow simmer. Cook for 10 minutes, or until the pears are just tender. Remove from the heat and gently stir in the raisins.

2. Heat the oven to 350 F. Spray a tube pan with baking spray. Sprinkle the remaining 1/4 cup brown sugar in the bottom of the pan. Arrange the pears, slightly overlapping, over the sugar.

3. In a medium bowl, use an electric mixer to beat together the butter, granulated sugar, molasses, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, allspice, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add the eggs, one at a time, scraping the bowl between additions. Add half the milk followed by half of the flour, mixing before adding the remaining half the milk and flour. Spoon into the prepared pan over the pears.

4. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted at the centre comes out clean. Allow to cool for 15 minutes in the pan, then place a large overturned plate or platter over the cake. Invert the cake so it is standing on the plate. If any of the pears stick to the pan, carefully remove them and return them to their place on the cake.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Blue Cheese & Pear Tarts

1. Preheat oven to 425 F (220 C). Lightly butter a baking sheet. Cut pear in half lengthwise; scoop out core and stem. Place cut sides down and cut lengthwise into 1/4-inch (0.5 cm) thick slices. Place on buttered baking sheet and roast 18 mins., flipping halfway, until golden. Transfer to cutting board and let cool. Reduce oven temperature to 375 F (190 C).

2. Meanwhile, in skillet, heat butter and oil over medium heat. Add onions and half of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, 8 mins., or until onions are tender and slightly golden. Set aside.

3. In bowl, whisk eggs, cream and sour cream. Whisk in remaining salt and pepper. Then chop pear slices into 1/4- to 1/2-inch (0.5 to 1 cm) pieces; set aside.

4. Place frozen tarts on clean baking sheet. Spoon onions, into bottom of each tart. Divide crumbled blue cheese and pear over onions. Pour cream mix into tart shells until just bits of filling are peaking through.

5. Place baking sheet in oven and bake 25 mins. or until filling is puffy. Allow to cool a little before serving. DAIRYGOODNESS.CA

Ingredients

- 1 pear
- 1 tsp (5 ml) butter
- 1 tsp (5 ml) olive oil
- 1 onion, cut into 1/2-inch (1 cm) dice
- 1/2 tsp (2 ml) salt
- 3 eggs
- 3/4 cup (175 ml) each 35% whipping cream and 14% sour cream
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) pepper
- 24 frozen tart shells (3-inch/7.5 cm size)
- 3-1/4 oz (100 g) Canadian Blue cheese, crumbled

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Have a few gaps in your schedule you're looking to fill?
Whether you're hoping to dance, drink or just relax, check out these hot upcoming events.

MIX OF SIX
Meghan Duffy
winnipeg@metronews.ca

Holiday jazz

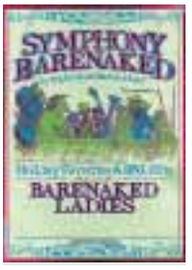
Christmas music is one of those things that people either love or will do anything to get away from. However, Santa's music done jazz-style makes it much more enjoyable for all the non-Christmas-music lovers out there. So here's what I suggest ... grab that special someone, a peppermint hot chocolate and head down to Manitoba Hydro Place Gallery Friday for 7 p.m. Christmas only comes once a year, so you really ought to make the most of it.

Saskatoon's Sheepdogs

Yes, this Canadian rock band from Saskatoon has hit it big in the last few years after being on the cover of The Rolling Stones after winning the Choose the Cover competition. They beat out 15 other acts and were the first unsigned band to do so in the history of the magazine. Go Canada! Well it just so happens that this soul-inspired rock band is coming to the 'Peg on Tuesday. Tickets are selling out fast for their show at the Burt, which kicks off at 8 p.m.

Get them to the Greek!

If you have never been to George Karasoulis' Greek restaurant at 333 Pembina Hwy. — Pembina Village Restaurant — you are missing out. Some friends and I were craving Greek, so we went to check it out and the food is amazing. The calamari, racks of lamb, homemade baklava, and of course the flaming cheese are all things you need to try. So if you are craving delicious homemade Greek, go see George at Pembina Village or call 204-477-5439.



Naked Ladies in the 'Peg

Well, now that I have your full attention, here's the scoop: The Barenaked Ladies — the band — will be performing three shows with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra Friday until Sunday. Friday and Saturday are both evening shows, finishing off with a 2 p.m. show on Sunday. What will you hear? Christmas songs, mixed in with a few of their hit singles. If you're looking for tickets, call 204-949-3999.

Get out and laugh

Nothing cures the winter blues like a few drinks mixed with a few laughs. Ron James, the Nova Scotia comedian, knows a thing or two about getting the crowd going. This is especially true when he talks about mid-life meltdowns, dirty politics and typical family issues. There are many reviews floating around about his new show, all saying he's downright hilarious. The show is Saturday and tickets are $59 — hey it could be an early Christmas present for someone needing a few laughs ... and cocktails.

Do something good!

Winnipeg Harvest and Habitat for Humanity are two great organizations that do a lot for those in need — especially this time of year. They are asking all Winnipeggers to come out and support their free Holiday concert — or should I say Fruitcake Show, as they have named it — on Sunday at the Prairie Theatre Exchange. If you can make it, please do not forget to grab a few cans from your pantry and some spare cash. For more info, email rascaltickets@gmail.com.

SLICE'S HAS A PASSION FOR PIZZA

ON THE MENU
METRO CUSTOM PUBLISHING

Sunday cruise night down Portage Avenue was a favourite pastime for Jack and Joel Kurkjian of Slice's Pizza. Reminiscing about their younger years (cruising down the strip in their classic car and eating pizza by the slice), they discovered it was this special tradition combined with their passion for each other that spawned a dream of someday owning their own pizzeria.

In April 1987, their dream came to fruition when their first of two locations — Slice's Pizza — opened for business on Portage Avenue.

"Our mission has always been great food at a great price," Joel says. "We pride ourselves in using only the freshest ingredients, the finest blend of cheeses and Slice's' own tomato sauce. We even offer organic whole wheat dough."

In 1999, Slice's Pizza was the recipient of the city of Winnipeg Community Services Department Environmental Health Services Food Service Merit Award.

With a sincere desire to give back to their community and the city where they realized their dream, Slice's Pizza supports many local charities. They also cater to schools, and corporate and private functions. "We even have school tours coming through our store to experience making their own pizzas hands-on," Jack says.

Celebrating their 25th year in business, Slice's Pizza is grooming the next generation. Their 10-year-old son Cameron has taken an interest in the business and is eager to get involved. The future looks bright for this successful local business.

With two locations to serve you, 1329 Portage Ave. and 401 Stafford Ave., Slice's Pizza (204-255-5555) delivers right to your door and is open seven days a week — 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Monday to Thursday, until 3 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and midnight on Sundays.

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HOLIDAY 2012 m gift guide

TONGRO IMAGES/THINKSTOCK

The tree this Yoda will top; clothing ideas; is she naughty or nice? — PAGES 30, 37, 39

Look your best during — and after — the holidays — PAGES 34, 35, 36

Click on these ideas for the videophile on your gift list — PAGE 32

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Natural Woodland Owl Ornament, $12.50, available at Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.

Winter Owl Ornament, $12.50, available at Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.

Claydough Robots, $2, available at Canadian Tire, canadian-tire.ca.

Plaid Moose Ornament, $2, available at Canadian Tire, canadiantire.ca.

Yoda Wireform, $74.99, available at Canadian Tire, canadiantire.ca.

Starbucks Cup Ornaments, $5.45, available at Starbucks, starbucks.ca.

Snowflake Ornament In Sterling Silver, $195, available at Tiffany & Co., tiffany.ca.

Glitter Bird Ornament, $9.50, available at Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.

Santa Yoda Tree Topper, $49.99, available at RetroFestive, RetroFestive.ca

JULMYS Hanging Decoration, 3-pack, $6.99, available at Ikea, ikea.com/ca.

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Tips to survive mall shopping

Stay sane. Timing, patience and online research will help

Try going to the mall before work for more convenient parking, less people and first crack at the newly restocked shelves. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

The holidays are a whole lot of fun — there are parties, snacks and plenty of chances to unwind.

There's absolutely no downside except, of course, going to the mall.

At this time of year, the mall is hot, crowded, and unpleasant, but shopping experts at RedFlagDeals.com have put together a list of tips that will help you handle it like a pro.

Go against the flow

Try hitting the mall before work for more convenient parking, less people — and the first crack at newly restocked shelves.

Good things come to those who wait

For friends or relatives that you won't see until after the holidays, consider holding off on shopping for their gifts. Yes, if you head out on Boxing Day the mall will be just as hot, crowded, and unpleasant, but the deals might be better.

Shop online

It's convenient and comfortable to shop online, so do as much of that as you can. And even if you are shopping in-store, make sure you research prices and items online first. Bargain hunting websites are a good place to start.

Layer up

If you are headed to the mall, dress lightly, in easy-to-remove layers. And bring something to stuff that heavy winter coat in.

NEWS CANADA

Our new HDPVR has all the trimmings.
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Television Wonderland

Sharp 90-inch LED TV — $9,999.99, below, Panasonic Viera TCL42U5 — $499, right.

Options for your viewing pleasure

MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

Wouldn't it be nice to wake up to a brand new television Christmas morning?

Whether you are looking for a new TV or simply want to add to your home theatre, there are plenty of options for you or the videophile on your shopping list.

Panasonic Viera TCL42U5 — $499
Not everyone needs all the bells and whistles of some of the more expensive televisions on the market. Sometimes you just want to watch TV. This 42-inch 1080p LCD TV gives a great picture for a fraction of the price of most other sets. You still get a variety of inputs (including three HDMI) plus you will benefit from Eco mode, which will save you money on your energy bills.

LG Cinema 3D LM9600 — $2,299
If your heart is set on a 3-D TV, look no further than this LED TV from LG. It has the ability to convert any 2-D content into breath-taking 3-D on the fly. Everything can be controlled through simple gestures using the Magic Remote, or simply tell your TV what you want it to do through voice control. You will find tons of inputs on the back, plus it's Wi-Fi enabled.

Sharp 90-inch LED TV — $9,999.99
Good luck bringing this one down the chimney Santa! Sharp's 90-inch LED TV is the largest in Canada. Experience movies the way they were meant to be seen — on the big screen. The larger screen allows for bigger speakers, giving you a theatre-like experience right in your home. Gamers will enjoy the Vyper Drive feature that reduces lag times while playing games. You can also connect wirelessly to the web or enjoy apps such as Netflix. This beautiful television comes with a hefty price tag, so don't even think about asking for it if there is even the slightest chance you are on the naughty list.

Samsung Blu-ray Player BD-E6500 — $219
Not only can this Blu-ray device play your favourite high-definition movies in 2-D and 3-D, it can turn any TV into a smart TV with built-in apps such as Netflix, YouTube and Facebook. If you already own a Samsung smartphone you can use it to control the action. The built-in USB port also allows playback of videos, photos and music from your USB devices.

Samsung Blu-ray Player BD-E6500 — $219, left, Logitech Harmony 650 Remote — $79.99, above, Apple TV — $109, top right.

Apple TV — $109
Access all of your iTunes content directly on your television. This tiny media player ensures all of your movies, TV shows, and music are readily available, plus get access to Netflix, YouTube and Vimeo without logging onto your computer. One of my favourite features has to be AirPlay, which allows you to stream content from your iPad, MacBook, or iMac right to your television with a simple click. Great for presentations or simply playing games and apps on the big screen.

Logitech Harmony 650 Remote — $79.99
At one time you had to pay a fortune to get an amazing universal remote. The Harmony 650 proves that's no longer the case. Complete with colour display, this advanced remote can control up to five devices at a fraction of the price of other high-end remotes. While it does require an Internet connected PC or Mac to set up, once it's up and running it simplifies even the most complex home theatre setup so everyone in the family can use it.

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Recipe. All-In-One Spiced Chocolate Loaf

This Green & Black's Organic All-In-One Spiced Chocolate Loaf recipe will be a sure hit during the holidays.

Ingredients:

- 50 g dark (70 per cent cocoa solids) chocolate
- 100 g plain flour
- 125 g icing sugar
- 1 tsp ground mixed spice
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 175 g unsalted butter at room temperature, plus extra for greasing
- 4 medium free-range eggs
- 100 g dark chocolate with ginger

Instructions:

1 Preheat the oven to 180 C/350 F/gas mark 4, and butter a 22-centimetre loaf pan.

2 Melt the dark chocolate using double boiler method (placing a microwave or heatproof bowl over a pan of gently simmering water) ensuring the bowl doesn't touch the water. Set aside to cool.

3 Blend the flour, sugar, spices and baking powder. This can be achieved using a food processor or a hand-held electric mixer.

4 Add the butter, cooled melted chocolate and the eggs and blend until evenly combined. Pour the mixture into the loaf pan and bake for about 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Carefully remove the loaf from the pan and cool on a wire rack.

5 Meanwhile, melt the ginger chocolate bar using the double boiler method and drizzle over the cooled cake. Makes one loaf.

Tip: You can also drizzle the loaf with other Green & Black's Organic chocolate. Dark, milk or white chocolate would also complement this cake's flavours.

Dark, milk or white chocolate would also complement this cake's flavours. CONTRIBUTED

RECIPE COMPLIMENTS OF GREEN & BLACK'S ORGANIC HOLIDAY 2012

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Grooming gifts for him

Calvin Klein Encounter, above.

JANINE FALCON
For Metro

From wake-up to spruce-up, these manly gift ideas will help him put his best self forward before his first coffee of the day.

Perk up his morning routine with the ultra-fresh **L'Occitane Verdon Adventure** set, which includes shower gel, soap, deodorant and eau de toilette. $82, loccitane.ca.

He'll appreciate the weightless **Biotherm Homme Force Supreme** anti-aging formulas that promise smoother, firmer, more comfortable skin. Lotion, $45 and Serum, $70; biotherm.ca.

If he's into natural stuff, he'll dig non-oily **Weleda After Shave Balm**, which cools and soothes with organic jojoba seed oil, aloe and myrrh. $26.99, well.ca.

Set him up for next November with the waterproof **Philips Styleshaver**, which trims, styles and shaves with easy precision. $99.99, personaledge.com.

He doesn't have to be a sexy vampire (or an actor who plays one) to wear **Calvin Klein Encounter**, a warm, woody scent. $67, thebay.com.

Ideal for the man who likes simple yet sophisticated skincare, **Shiseido's Men's Essentials Gift Set** includes a handsome toiletry case. $70, thebay.com

Help him love his hair more with **Kerastase Anti-Oiliness Daily Treatment Shampoo** and **Leave-In Treatment**. $36 each, kerastase.com.

For the multi-tasking man, the **Jack Black Core Collection** includes cleanser+toner, shave-oil cream+skin conditioner, and moisturizer+SPF. $52, ebeauty.ca.

Stock his gym bag with zesty essentials, such as **Crabtree & Evelyn's West Indian Lime Travel Set**. $26, Crabtree & Evelyn boutiques.

Clockwise from above: Jack Black Core Collection, Kerastase Anti-Oiliness Daily Treatment Shampoo, Shiseido's Men's Essentials Gift Set, Biotherm Homme Force Supreme, Philips Styleshaver.

Above left: L'Occitane Verdon Adventure set. Bottom left to bottom right: Weleda After Shave Balm, Crabtree & Evelyn's West Indian Lime Travel Set.

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metro News worth sharing.

Beauty bounty

JANINE FALCON
For Metro

From beauty empowerment to fragranced skin, from shimmering nails to luscious hair, these gift ideas have her (and you) covered.

More than a makeup book, **Bobbi Brown Pretty Powerful** (Chronicle Books, 2012) is a confidence-builder from a pro who empowers with must-try tips and tricks. $34.95 hardcover, chapters.indigo.ca.

Give her nail polish collection a brand new sheen with **YSL La Laque Couture Top Coat in Première Neige**, an iridescent top coat that sparkles over any colour. $27, Holt Renfrew.

Any scent from the Byredo Parfums collection is a unique and special gift for fragrance lovers; **Byredo Black Saffron**, an Oriental Spicy eau de parfum is the newest. $235, Holt Renfrew.

Luscious **LoveFresh Lemon Verbena Body Butter** pampers skin with aloe, chamomile and calendula extracts, and is made sans parabens or petrolatum. $24, lovefresh.com.

Glamorous yet understated like its creator Aerin Lauder, the **Aerin Holiday Style Palette** offers foolproof shadows and subtle highlight powder. $78, esteelauder.ca.

Feminine and fragrant, **Valentino Valentina Body Scrub** is a creamy exfoliant in a lovely frosted jar she'll keep for years. $78, thebay.com.

The award-winning complexion-saver of the season, this natural moisture booster relieves exczema. **Consonant HydrExtreme Serum**, $72, consonantbody.com.

She'll swoon over **MAC's Sinfully Chic Face Kit**, a charming neutral makeup + brush set. Trust. $85, maccosmetics.com.

Soft, shiny, swingy hair is hers with silicone-free **Shu Uemura Cleansing Oil Shampoo**, which gently purifies all hair types, including fine, limp, and oily. $55.

Below: Valentino Valentina Body Scrub.

Left: YSL La Laque Couture Top Coat in Première Neige. Right: LoveFresh Lemon Verbena Body Butter. Below: Byredo Black Saffron.

Above: Aerin Holiday Style Palette. Far left: Shu Uemura Cleansing Oil Shampoo. Left: Consonant HydrExtreme Serum. Bottom: MAC's Sinfully Chic Face Kit.

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Teen dream beauty and body care

JANINE FALCON
For Metro

From savvy style advice to smart skincare to totally adorbs makeup, great gift ideas for the teens in your life.

An energizing citrus kick in the morning shower via a **LUSH Cool Christmas** duo is just the thing for sleepyhead teens. $16.95, lush.ca

Whether your teen is obsessed with fashion or just developing his or her own style, **Learn to Speak Fashion: A Guide to Creating, Showcasing and Promoting Your Style** (Owl Kids, 2012) offers smart insider insight, advice and encouragement you'll love too. $16.95 paperback, chapters.indigo.ca.

Put the kybosh on clogged teenage pores with a **Clarisonic Mia** for deep-cleaning sessions every other day. $139, sephora.ca.

No girl can resist mini beauty treats; the **Soap & Glory Small Wonders Gift Set** totes fits the mini bill (and your wallet). $20, Shoppers Drug Mart.

If you love makeup, you'll want to snag a **Stila Snow Angel Color Palette** — 18 shadows, 12 blushes and a mascara (not shown) — for yourself, too. $51, sephora.ca.

Get your teen on a good-skin regimen with a **Dermalogica Clean Start Starter Kit**, which handles pesky zits, too. $45.50, cleanstart.dermalogica.com.ca

From the fashion queen of whimsy, this **Anna Sui Holiday Collection** includes blush, shadow, lip gloss and a sweet lacy pouch. $50, Sears.ca and Murale.ca.

The Body Shop For Men Maca Root Scrub & Shave Set sets your young fellow up with face wash, moisturizer — and eye cream Dad can swipe. $35, thebodyshop.ca.

Nourishing essentials for feet and hands, such as the **Burt's Bees Best of Burt's Bees Set**, are easy stocking stuffers. $24.99, burtsbees.ca.

Middle and left: Stila makeup palettes.

From bottom left to bottom right: Burt's Bees Best of Burt's Bees Set, The Body Shop For Men Maca Root Scrub & Shave Set, Clarisonic Mia, LUSH Cool Christmas, Dermalogica Clean Start Starter Kit.

Above: Anna Sui Holiday Collection.

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On the naughty list

Ruffle Mesh Baby Doll, $29.95, available at La Vie En Rose, lavieenrose.com.

Red Charmeuse Cami With Black Lace, $45, right, Jersey Cami With Black Lace, $35, above, Black And White Charmeuse Boxer Shorts, $35, below, all available at Jacob, jacob.ca.

Naughty Santa Bustier, $59.50, available at La Senza, lasenza.com.

Bra ($14) And Panty ($5) Set, available at Walmart, walmart.ca.

Bra ($14) And Panty ($5) Set, available at Walmart, walmart.ca.

Mrs. Claus Halter Dress Set With Stockings $49.95, available at La Vie En Rose, lavieenrose.com.

Sexy Mrs. Claus Set With Battery Powered Star lights, $59.95, available at La Vie En Rose, lavieenrose.com.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day Dinner

TWO SEATINGS:
3:30PM & 6:00PM

Carved Roast Turkey with Stuffing
Cranberry Sauce and Gravy
Sweet & Sour Sauce Meatballs
Mashed Potato
Perogies with Fried Onions
Honey Glazed Carrots
Tossed Green Salad and Caesar Salad
Potato Salad
Macaroni Salad
Coleslaw
Vegetable Tray / Cheese Tray / Relish Tray
Seafood Tray
Fresh Fruit Tray and Assorted Dessert Table
Dinner Rolls & Butter
Coffee, Decaf, Tea & Pop Included

Adults $24.95 Seniors $22.95

DECEMBER 25TH
TAKE OUT TURKEY

TURKEY DINNER
$169.95 plus taxes
HAM DINNER
$129.99 plus taxes
PICKUP TIMES
10AM-4PM
FEEDS 8-10 ADULTS
CARVED TURKEY EXTRA $15
EXTRA APPLE PIE $10 plus taxes
15 - 17 LB TURKEY
2 LITRES GRAVY
2 LITRES MASHED POTATOES
2 LITRES SAGE DRESSING
3 LITRES MIXED VEGETABLES
(corn, peas, carrots)
1 LITRE CRANBERRY SAUCE
12 DINNER ROLLS
1 APPLE PIE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31

NEW YEAR'S EVE DINNER

4:00PM & 10:00PM

Your Choice of Appetizers
Shrimp Cocktail
Tomato Ricotta Bruchetta
Choice of Soup
Bison Consume with Vegetable Garnish
Beer & Cheddar Soup
Choice of Salad
Caesar Salad
Field Green with Almonds, Sundried Cranberries
Your Choice of Entrees
10oz New York Steak with Yorkshire Pudding $35.95
8oz Filet Mignon with Bordelaise Sauce $37.95
Camembert Stuffed Chicken, Raspberry Sauce $34.95
Veal Marsala $34.95
Grilled Salmon with Champagne Hollandaise Sauce $34.95
Penne Rigate with Sundried Tomato & Garden Vegetables Rose Sauce $25.95
All above Entrees come with Asparagus Parmesan and Honey Glazed Julienne Carrots all above Entrees with the exception of the Pasta come with your choice of Starch

Choice of Starch
Crown Stuffed Potato
Baked Potato
Rice Pilaf

Choice of Desserts
Caramel Decadence
High 5
Orange Blossom
New York Cheesecake

Childrens Menu
Chicken Fingers & Fries $9.95
6oz Steak Sandwich $12.75
Cheese Burger & Fries $8.75
includes Ice Cream

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1 2013

NEW YEAR'S DAY DINNER

TWO SEATINGS:
3:30PM & 6:00PM

Carved Roast Beef with Au Jus
Roast Pork Loin
Southern Fried Chicken
Swedish Meatballs
Perogies with Fried Onions
Scallop Potato
Medley Veggie
Tossed Green Salad and Caesar Salad
Potato / Macaroni / Ham / Cheese Salad
Coleslaw
Vegetable Tray / Cheese Tray / Relish Tray
Seafood Tray
Fresh Fruit Tray and Assorted Dessert Table
Dinner Rolls & Butter
Coffee, Decaf, Tea & Pop Included

The Gort Dining Room

Adults $24.95 Seniors $22.95

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Looking for deals online can help alleviate some of the holiday shopping stress. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

Take stress out of shopping

Checking your list. Shop online, buy gifts as a group and look for giveaways

EDEN SPODEK
YummyMummyClub.ca

December is supposed to be the time of holiday cheer.

Yet, so often we get stressed out when it comes to holiday shopping. Stores are crowded, kids are nagging for that "must-have" new toy or electronic gadget, not to mention teachers' gifts, and something for the BFF who has everything but insists on upholding the gift exchange you have been doing since you shared a university dorm. Then there's finding that special something for the love of your life. Here are some tips to help make life easier, not just this month, but all year round.

Make a list in advance
When you make a list in advance and stick to it, you will reduce the risk of impulse buying and cut down on browsing time.

Buy teachers' gifts as a class
Get together with other parents and pool your money together so you can buy a group gift. Gift certificates from a local bookstore or mall allow your child's teacher to choose something they will enjoy instead of toss out.

Donate to a favourite charity in someone's honour
Pretty much every charity accepts donations online — it's quick and easy, and with a minimum donation you will get a tax receipt, too. It may not be as much fun as unwrapping presents but it feels wonderful to do something for others less fortunate while cutting down on unnecessary gifts.

Shop online
Browse, research, comparison shop, and find unique gifts all from the comfort of your own keyboard. It's easy to look for the best deals. With the strong Canadian dollar, consider cross-border shopping. Look for retailers who offer deals on shipping and free gift wrapping, too.

Watch for online giveaways
There are lots of great giveaways on blogs, Twitter and community sites, including YummyMummyClub. The chances of winning are surprisingly pretty good.

YUMMYMUMMYCLUB.CA IS AN ONLINE RESOURCE TO HELP BUSY WOMEN SURVIVE MOTHERHOOD.

Don't get caught in holiday shipping hubbub

Being separated from your loved ones is difficult year round, but the holiday season can often be the hardest — something Kirsten Iversen, 27, knows far too well.

While the advertising executive has been based in Canada for the past nine years, she has always made it home to Hong Kong for the holidays. But not this year.

"It's the first time in my life that I won't wake up at home on Christmas Day," she says. "I still want to feel like I'm part of the morning present unwrapping tradition, so I'm sending a care package to my parents, brother and sister to open up with all the gifts."

Iversen's package will be one of the hundreds of millions that get shipped internationally during the holidays, a task that requires a bit of preparation. "When planning presents for family and friends overseas, make sure to account for packing and shipping them properly so that your gifts arrive on time and in great condition," advises Nicolas Dorget, vice-president of marketing for UPS Canada.

Here are the company's top international shipping tips to help the holiday hubbub run a little smoother:

Research the destination. Some countries have restrictions imposed upon incoming products for political, economic or health and food safety reasons. Avoid any misunderstandings by researching what can be legally shipped from Canada to the country in question before you start shopping. This can be done by accessing the UPS TradeAbility International Tools online within the "shipping" tab on ups.com.

Know the shipping deadlines. Dec. 17-24 is peak season for all international shipping providers. In 2011, the busiest day of the year globally was Dec. 22, where almost 26 million packages were delivered, which equated to 300 every second. Be sure to save yourself any last-minute scrambling and ship gifts well in advance.

Get clear with customs and labels. Print clearly and legibly on all customs declaration forms and list everything in the package. If you leave anything off the form, your package risks being seized and detained at the border. Another handy tip is to place a second shipping label on the gift itself, just in case the exterior label is damaged or removed.

Upgrade your interior cushioning. Consider the journey your package is about to go on. Be sure to protect your item by surrounding it with at least two inches of interior cushioning. But know this — the most basic interior cushioning can only withstand a single impact before the absorbency starts to wane. Higher grade cushioning is thinner and more effective, which actually allows you to use a smaller box — and may end up saving you money.

Seal with care. String, cellophane and masking tape are "no-nos" — use strong, thick tape specifically designed for shipping.

Track your package. Record the shipment data for every package.

NEWS CANADA

You can be frugal without being Scrooge

From hosting holiday get-togethers to sharing traditional feasts with friends and family, the holiday party season can wreak havoc on your bank account. According to a poll by TD Canada Trust, Canadians planned to spend an average of $1,100 on food, gifts, and entertainment during the festive season last year.

As you are dashing through the mall buying last minute decorations, host gifts and groceries, consider these tips from TD Canada Trust on how to scale back the party season without scaling back on the cheer:

- Make a plan — First, figure out how much you can afford to spend on parties this season.
- Set a budget — Create a budget for what you can realistically afford, and don't forget to include incidentals like host/hostess gifts and taxis.
- Look for creative ways to cut costs — If the party is at your house, consider a potluck dinner and look to your garden for natural, evergreen decorations like holly and pinecones.
- Start stashing cash now — Even if you don't have a lot of money to save, start small, be diligent and it will add up.

NEWS CANADA

Kid-friendly gear

Firefly Fuzzy Animal Toque, $19.99 each, available at Sport Chek, sportchek.ca.

Hooded Sweater Dress With Leggings, $19.99, available at Winners, winners.ca.

Girls Sequin Dress, $18, available at Walmart, walmart.ca.

Boys Hoodie, $12, available at Walmart, walmart.ca.

The Rockstar Pop Colour Skinny Jeans, $44.50, available at Old Navy, oldnavy.ca.

Boys Sweater, $12, available at Walmart, walmart.ca.

Toddler Wazzup Beanie, Various Styles, $20 each, available at O'Neill, oneill.com.

Easiest. Pledge. Ever.

Still need reasons to shop downtown?

This holiday season

Pledge to Shop Downtown

for a chance to win gifts and a $500 shopping spree.

Take the pledge and find more great gift ideas at
facebook.com/shopdowntown

Contest runs until December 21st.

downtown WINNIPEG BIZ

Sidney Crosby listens as NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr speaks to reporters on Thursday in New York. MARY ALTAFFER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fehr-ing the worst: NHL talks stall again

Day 82. No negotiations planned after NHLPA's proposal rejected by league

Quoted

"It looks like this is not going to be resolved in the immediate future."

NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr

The NHL labour talks have hit another roadblock — and this one appears to be massive.

After two optimistic days that suggested a deal could be imminent, negotiations between the league and the NHL Players' Association broke off dramatically Thursday.

The NHLPA presented a new offer on Thursday afternoon, a proposal that union head Donald Fehr called "a clear outline" to end the dispute.

Fehr said he believed the two sides are "clearly very close if not on top of one another in connection with most of the major issues."

The league flatly rejected the offer, saying the two sides aren't close despite what Fehr says.

"I don't know why he did that," an angry Gary Bettman told a news conference.

The NHL commissioner said any new offers the league made this week are now off the table.

"The take or give or bottom line on all this is: It appears that the union is suggesting because we made substantial movements in certain areas that we're close to a deal," said Bettman. "But those moves were contingent on the union specifically agreeing on other things, which, while the union may have moved towards, didn't agree to."

During talks this week, the league said it was willing to increase the amount of deferred transition money paid to the players to $300 million US — which sat directly between what had most recently been tabled by the NHL ($211 million) and NHLPA ($393 million).

Another issue that surfaced was the league's desire to see a 10-year term on the collective bargaining agreement. The union's offer Thursday was for eight years with an option for opting out after Year 6.

"I'm disappointed beyond belief that we are where we are tonight," said Bettman.

Fehr's comments took an equally negative tone.

"What can we tell the hockey fans of Canada? You can tell them that it looks like this is not going to be resolved in the immediate future," Fehr said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NBA

Melo-less Knicks still East's best after beating Heat

Raymond Felton scored a season-high 27 points, and the New York Knicks connected on 18 three-pointers to more than offset the absence of Carmelo Anthony while topping Miami for the second time this season, beating the Heat 112-92 on Thursday night.

Steve Novak scored 18 points, J.R. Smith added 13 and Tyson Chandler scored 13 for the Knicks, who won their fifth straight and moved 1 1/2 games clear of Miami for the best record in the Eastern Conference. The Knicks made eight 3-pointers in the third quarter alone, the most by any NBA team in any quarter so far this season.

Anthony sat out, one night after needing five stitches to close a cut on his left hand.

LeBron James nearly picked up his second straight triple-double — 31 points, 10 rebounds, nine assists — in Miami's second straight loss.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MLB

Star free agents left waiting after winter meetings

As teams headed home from the baseball winter meetings on Thursday in Nashville, the biggest free agents were still on the market.

The availability of slugger Josh Hamilton and pitcher Zack Greinke held up decisions on other signings and possible trades involving Rangers star Michael Young and the Mets' Cy Young Award winner R.A. Dickey.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Steelers hope 'Big Ben' bulletproof in return

Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger watches last Sunday's game against the Ravens from the sidelines. Roethlisberger will return to the starting lineup this Sunday with some high-tech extra protection. ROBB CARR/GETTY IMAGES FILE

The Pittsburgh Steelers aren't taking any chances with their franchise quarterback's sprained right shoulder and dislocated rib.

Though the Steelers confirmed Ben Roethlisberger will return to the starting lineup on Sunday against San Diego after missing three weeks due to injury, Roethlisberger will take the field with a little extra protection.

Roethlisberger will play with a custom-fit rib/chest compression shirt and a layer of Kevlar-lined composite in his shoulder pads to help absorb hits to his clavicle and shoulder joint regions.

The padding has grown popular across the NFL.

Quoted

"I think he brings a dimension to the team that nobody else can bring."

Steelers wide receiver Mike Wallace on Ben Roethlisberger

The composite — about a half-inch thick — in Roethlisberger's shoulder pads is similar to the gear Unequal Technologies puts in its chest protectors for baseball catchers. Roethlisberger said last week his shoulder pads had been "juiced up" by trainers.

Whatever he's wearing, the Steelers (7-5) are eager to have him back on the field. Roethlisberger took "90 per cent" of the first-team snaps on Thursday without any major issues.

"He looks like himself for the most part," offensive co-ordinator Todd Haley said. "Now I don't know what he's feeling when he's doing some of those things. But it looks like he's moving around pretty good."

Roethlisberger said he felt "good" but declined to expand. Haley doesn't expect there to be any limitations to the playbook, though he joked he might not call as many designed run plays for his quarterback, who never met a play he didn't like to extend. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quinn reflects on Belcher's last days

Seeking help. Stigma makes it hard for some players to deal with underlying mental-health issues

Brady Quinn can't help but wonder whether he missed something in the final days of Jovan Belcher's life.

Could the Kansas City Chiefs' quarterback have listened better to his teammate? Could he have noticed a change in the linebacker's temperament? Did Belcher utter something under his breath that may have let on that he was capable of killing his girlfriend and himself?

"When you ask someone how they're doing, do you really mean it?" Quinn wondered. "When you answer back, are you really telling the truth?"

The murder-suicide last Saturday raised similar questions among players and coaches across the NFL. In an era in which physical safety is of paramount importance, it's become clear that ensuring the emotional well-being of the men who play the game is just as essential.

"The relationships you have with people face-to-face, on a daily basis, kind of get brushed aside for everything else that's out there," Quinn said. "A lot of times people hide their issues, their problems. They don't talk to anyone until it's too late."

This past July, the NFL established an emergency hotline that operates 24 hours a day and connects players, staff and family members in crisis with mental-health professionals who are not affiliated with the league or its teams. The group, which provides a similar service to the Veterans Administration, is required to keep its conversations confidential unless the individual calling indicates they may harm themselves or others. The stigma often attached to mental health is pervasive in the NFL, where a macho culture has been long ingrained. Several players indicated that the same attitude that carried them to the NFL — that in some ways they are indestructible — makes it difficult for them to reconcile needing outside help.

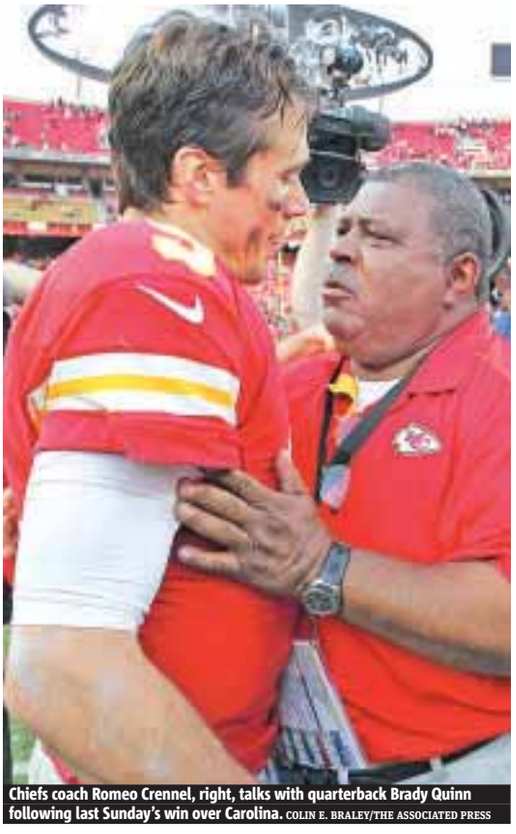
"In all my years playing football, I've never really seen a guy come out and say he needed help with this or he was having issues with this," said Rams offensive tackle Wayne Hunter, who's in his ninth year in the league. "Guys, including myself, generally keep our personal issues to ourselves."

Hunter said that when he was with the Jets, he took advantage of a team psychologist who provided support. Otherwise, he leaned on teammates.

"It was nice to have another set of ears other than the team psychologist," Hunter said.

"The psychologist analyzes and sometimes overanalyzes — I'm talking generally speaking — and they give you what they think is a right answer. But going to a friend gives you another perspective, gives you his side and a more personal side."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Chiefs coach Romeo Crennel, right, talks with quarterback Brady Quinn following last Sunday's win over Carolina. COLIN E. BRALEY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Murder-suicide

'She loved her family,' says uncle

A relative of the slain girlfriend of Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher said Thursday that she was a loyal friend who brought joy to others with her smiles and laughter.

Kasandra Perkins' great-uncle Ted Downing also told mourners at a funeral service that the 22-year-old Perkins loved her family and considered her three-month-old daughter, Zoey, to be the love of her life.

"She had a deep, deep understanding about the important things in life," Downing said during a memorial at a rural North Texas church five days after Belcher killed Perkins before shooting himself in the head.

Downing said Perkins was a loyal friend, recalling a time when she was a child when she was upset that a friend of hers did not get a desired part in a play. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Comeback. UFC fighter turned to his apparel company during injury

Fighter, entrepreneur: Mike "Quick" Swick can wear his own signature shirt into the cage or design yours.

The UFC welterweight can also help you out with stickers, decals, banners and signs courtesy of his company Spartan Screen Printing in San Jose, Calif.

His day job came in handy when he was sidelined for 910 days due to a digestive disorder and knee reconstruction. After losing to Paulo Thiago at UFC 109 in February 2010, Swick did not fight until this past August.

Following that win over DaMarques Johnson, he returns to action Saturday against Matt "The Immortal" Brown on a televised card at the KeyArena.

Swick, 33, said while he had been smart with his fight winnings, "I never counted on a two-and-a-half-year rainy day.

"I invested all the money that I made, pretty much," he said. "I don't blow a lot. I invested in business. I have a business in San Jose and I did do that smartly so that it took care of me."

Swick (15-4) made up for lost time in his comeback fight, when he collected a $50,000 US bonus for knockout of the night. His resumé also includes owning a pressure-washing company, selling cars, waiting tables and time as a bouncer/bartender.

"I feel like, next to fighting, I guess I'm an entrepreneur," he added. "I love business. I love trying to make business work and making the right decisions and building stuff."

Swick, along with former UFC fighter Roger Huerta, is also working on building a gym in Phuket, Thailand.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mike "Quick" Swick
LARS BARON/GETTY IMAGES FILE

UFC

Diaz next on GSP's hit list

UFC president Dana White says Georges St-Pierre has asked to fight Nick Diaz next.

And the UFC boss says the UFC welterweight champion will likely get his wish.

St-Pierre was thought to be headed to a superfight with middleweight champion Anderson Silva next. But White says GSP told him he has unfinished business with Diaz. THE CANADIAN PRESS

UFC

First women's fight to headline UFC 157

Former Olympic judo bronze medallist and rising mixed-martial arts star Ronda Rousey will fight in the main event at UFC 157 on Feb. 23 in Anaheim, Calif., where she will face Liz Carmouche in the first women's fight in UFC history. Rousey signed with the UFC in November after winning the bantamweight championship with Strikeforce. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Horoscopes

Aries
March 21 - April 20
You can be successful on a material level but you will also have to take on some heavy responsibilities. Are you prepared to do that? It's important that you decide one way or the other before making your next move.

Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You may doubt that you are up to the task that has been set for you, but you must not let those doubts take hold. Think of life as a wonderful adventure. It's how you play the game.

Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Group activities are under the spotlight today and you may meet someone who has a profound effect on the way you look at the world. If you feel it is your destiny to do something special, you will soon get the chance.

Cancer
June 22 - July 23
If you want to make a name for yourself, now is the time to begin. Set new goals and start long-term projects. Just make sure you know what the consequences will be. This isn't for fun, this is serious.

Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Unexpected delays may frustrate you today, and maybe into the weekend, but there is nothing you can do about them. So, lighten up. The scenery may pass slowly but that gives you more time to enjoy it.

Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Your money situation may be going through an up and down phase, but the planets indicate that real wealth is within your grasp. You'll change the way you think about what you own and earn over the next 24 hours.

Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Someone you usually get along with so well is hard to get through to today. It's as if there is an invisible barrier between you. Don't worry, it's nothing serious. They just need to be left alone with their thoughts for a while.

Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
Don't worry if a plan or project you have been working on for months, maybe even years, is still not complete. It's a long-term project, after all. Having said that, see how far you can move it forward today.

Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
At some point today, you will realize that what seems like harmless enjoyment to you may not be so harmless to other people. It's important to remember that you don't live in a vacuum. Actions always have consequences.

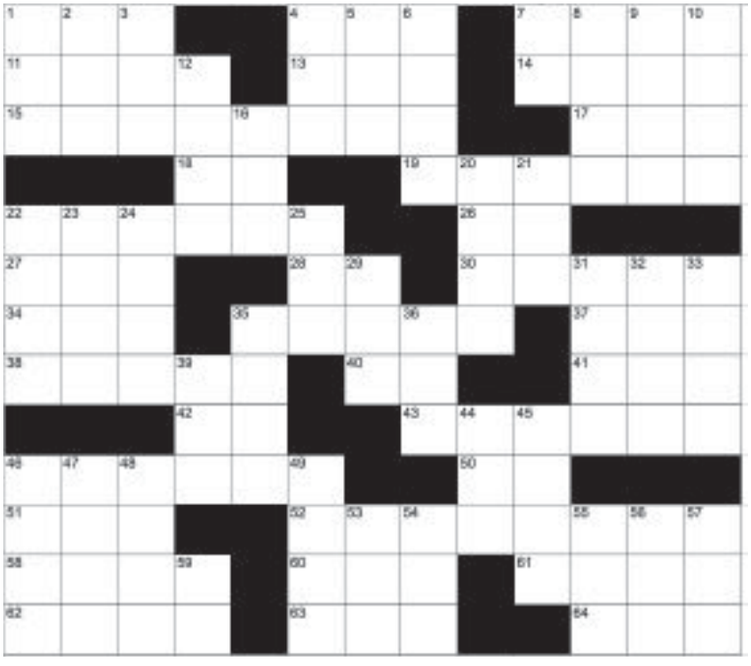
Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Something will happen over the next two or three days that reminds you of your responsibilities. Most important of all is your duty to loved ones. How can you help ease a relative's pain?

Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Others may wonder why you are so difficult to get through to but even an Aquarius needs to spend some time alone. Come the weekend you will be your old self again, open and happy and eager to share.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
The limitations and restrictions of the past few days will start to lift and by Monday, at the latest, you will be free to pursue your own interests. Hopefully, those limitations will have taught you the importance of timing. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword

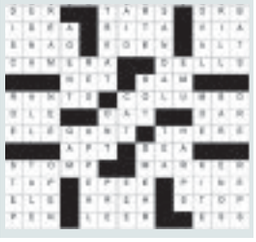
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. — carte (2 wds)
4. Family Ties actor: Michael J. —
7. A softened oath
11. Painted metalware
13. Mine yield
14. Withered
15. Type of stew
17. "The Crying Game" actor Stephen —
18. Commercial message
19. Seem
22. Where ends meet
26. Common Latin abbr.
27. Latin 101 verb
28. Contented sigh
30. Dims
34. Funnyman Conway
35. Rise and —
37. Fury
38. Cubic metre
40. Courtroom figure (abbr.)
41. For shame!
42. Apiece (abbr.)
43. Extremely bright
46. Designer McCartney
50. Musical note
51. — Ramsey
52. Sloppy
58. Crew needs
60. The Royal Canadian — Farce
61. Boxcar rider
62. Factual
63. On the authority of
64. Coal container

Down
1. Banking convenience
2. Role for Ed Asner
3. — My Children
4. Haze
5. Openings (anat.)
6. Warrior princess of TV
7. Plural suffix
8. "An Officer and a Gentleman" actor
9. Locale
10. Letter starter
12. Zest
16. Chemical suffix
20. Tube
21. Small green veggie
22. Broadway musical
23. Overlook
24. Italian capital
25. Bleachers cheer
29. Concealed
31. Boost
32. Lake near Niagara Falls
33. Flower starter
35. Fasten tightly
36. Henpeck
39. Family mem.
44. Brat
45. Child's card game: Go —
46. Photographed
47. Shed one of these
48. Beige shade
49. On the double
53. Fib
54. Like some verbs (abbr.)
55. Peg
56. Sash
57. Put on
59. Opposite of NW

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

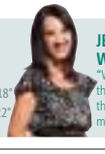
How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

8		4		5		2	6	
	1	9						
			3					9
5		2	1					
7			6		5			2
					2	8		7
1					4			
						6	3	
	2	5		8		4		1

Yesterday's Sudoku

Weather

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
MAX: -12° MIN: -19°	MAX: -13° MIN: -19°	MAX: -18° MIN: -22°



BT BREAKFAST TELEVISION

JENNA KHAN
WEATHER SPECIALIST
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SALE PRICE:

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PWR EQUIP, FOG LAMPS, MYKEY, ECOBOOST, UP TO 47 MPG!

MSRP: ~~$29,749~~

SALE PRICE:

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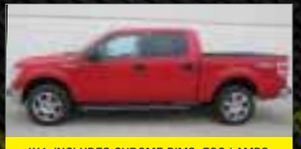

4X4, INCLUDES CHROME RIMS, FOG LAMPS, PWR GROUP, BLUETOOTH, CHROME BOARDS

2010 FORD F-150 S/CREW XLT XTR

$25,449 / $111****

S/CAB, 4X4, X SPORT, AUTOMATIC, PWR GROUP, CRUISE, ONLY 18000 KMS, MUST SEE!

2011 FORD RANGER S/CAB 4X4

$17,899 / $119****

XTR PACKAGE, CHROME RIMS, CHROME RUNNING BOARDS, LOADED!

2011 FORD F-150 XLT 4X4

$21,679 / $141****

4X4, LEATHER, AUTOMATIC, ROOF RACK, CREW CAB, POWER GROUP

2008 NISSAN FRONTIER

$19,699 / $158****

HEATED SEATS, AIR, SAT RADIO, AUTOMATIC, 75000 KMS

2008 FORD FOCUS SES

$8,498 / $99****

ALL WHEEL DRIVE, POWER GROUP, HEATED SEATS, ROOF RACK, GREAT CONDITION

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$29,659 / $219****

INCLUDES POWER EQUIP, AIR, SAT RADIO, ONLY 6000 KMS, MUST SEE!

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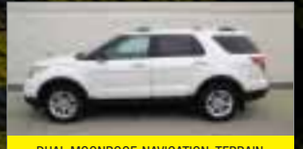

DUAL MOONROOF, NAVIGATION, TERRAIN MANAGEMENT, HEATED LEATHER

2012 FORD EXPLORER 4X4

$34,899 / $229****

POWER GROUP, AIR, CRUISE, AUTOMATIC

2012 FORD FOCUS SE

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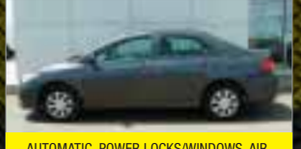
S/CAB, XTR, FOG LAMPS, CHROME BOARDS AND RIMS, AIR, CRUISE TOW PKG

2008 FORD F-150 XLT 4X4

$16,899 / $119****



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2011 TOYOTA COROLLA

$14,899 / $99****

4 DOOR, HEMI ENGINE, POWER GROUP, AIR, CRUISE

2008 DODGE RAM 1500 4X4

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4 WHEEL DRIVE, BLUETOOTH, PWR GROUP, CRUISE CONTROL, V6

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Driving Change

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**All used vehicle prices and payments are plus taxes and dealer installed options. Payments are based on $1500.00 down or equivalent trade-in value. Payments are bi-weekly and based on 60/72/84 month term at 4.99% OAC.

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